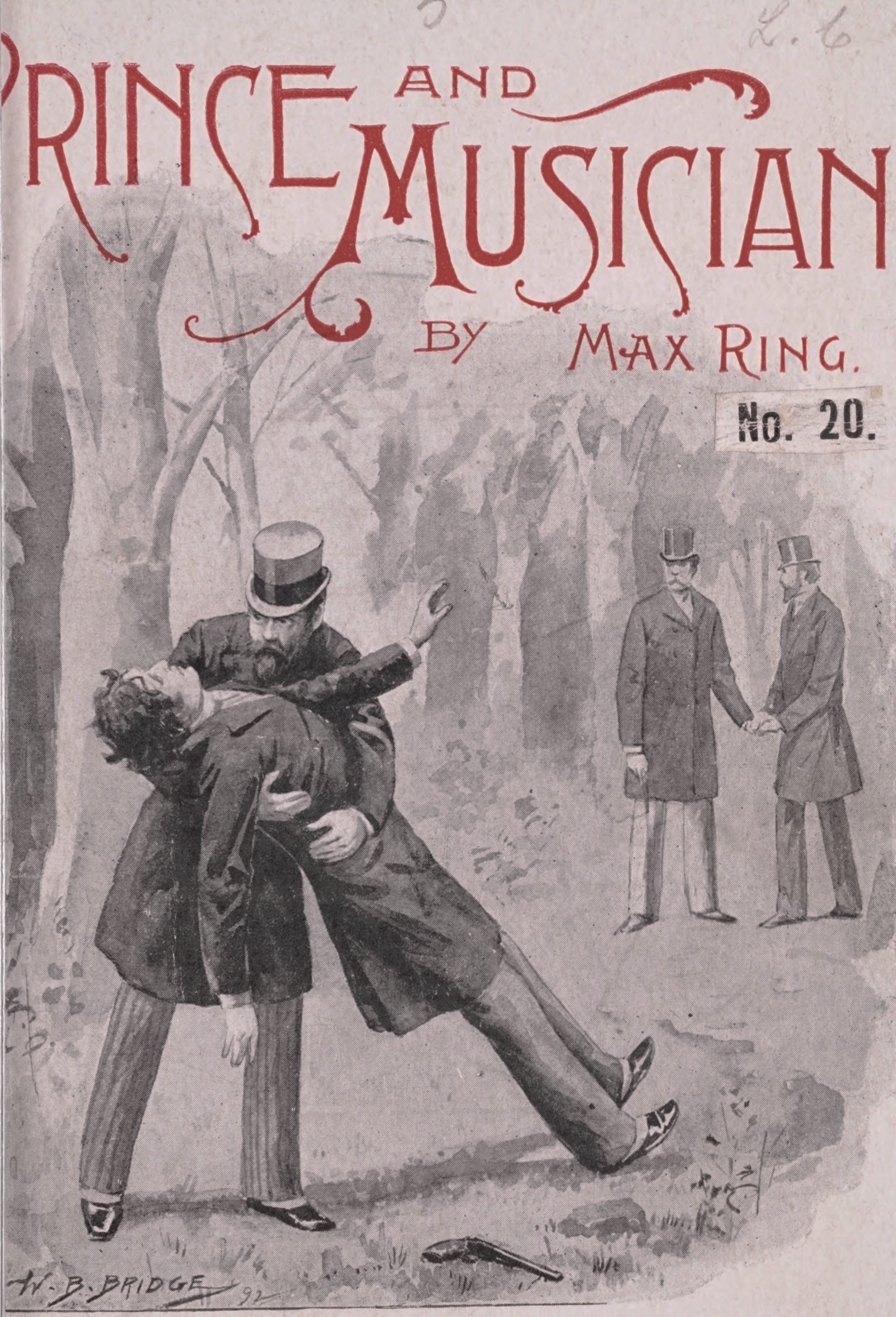
# PRINCE AND MUSICIAN

BY MAX RING.

No. 20.

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On the virtuoso's breast, she saw a bunch of maybells. p. 23.

# PRINCE AND MUSICIAN

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

MAX RING.

TRANSLATED BY

HETTIE E. MILLER.

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# BOOK I

# PRINCE AND MUSICIAN

## I

### THE VIRTUOSO

Upon the day on which this story opens, the large concert hall of the Academy of Music was filled to overflowing, and hundreds of people had been refused admittance at the box-office, although the price of the tickets was raised. Hence, only the *élite* of the public, the leaders of society, of the aristocracy, of wealth and of the intellectual world were present.

In the gilded Court-box was to be seen the king, who was a lover of the fine arts, with his bright, intelligent face; by his side his more serious queen, who, as a rule, patronized only sacred music, but who that day had made an exception to her rule in honor of the celebrated artist.

About the royal pair were grouped the numerous members of the family, among them the accomplished crown princess, the acknowledged friend and patroness of all artists and musicians. In this she was rivaled by her younger sister, the Grand-Duchess Alexandrine, who was visiting her at that time, and who strove to attract famous personages to her Residence, in order to render the place a veritable seat of the Muses.

In the background were sitting and standing the ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting, generals and diplomat-

ists in gold embroidered uniforms decorated with orders, foreign guests of distinction, and government officials who held positions of trust and had been awarded the honor of an invitation.

The boxes near by were occupied by members of the aristocracy, and afforded the impatient audience, and especially the strangers present, pleasant diversion before the concert began.

They pointed out the most prominent notables of the exclusive circle, glanced at the ladies through their opera-glasses, admired their beauty and the elegance of their tasteful toilettes. With a certain awe they gazed at an old gentleman in the uniform of a chamberlain, to which uniform he lent additional grace. They whispered his name in one another's ears, a name which was known from the snow-covered summit of Chimborazo to the distant Asiatic plains, and which belonged to one of the greatest naturalists in the kingdom.

As the learned man was famed for his universal knowledge, young Prince Egon von Schwarzfels was famed for his manly beauty, his wonderful amiability and his chivalrous boldness. He was the court Alcibiades, celebrated for his innumerable adventures, his vanity and his rare gifts.

His slender, elegant form was more elastic than strong; his interesting face, with its fiery eyes, sensual lips and somewhat dissipated but bold features, reminded one involuntarily of the *roué* of the Regency.

The gallant prince was at the moment dividing his attentions between two ladies, the Duchess Léonie von Taland and Countess Ada Harrer; now paying court to the intellect and position of the elder, now to the grace and beauty of the younger.

Undoubtedly, the duchess was one of the most prominent ladies at the Residence, by reason of her birth, her influential connections, her unlimited wealth and her cultured mind. Although past fifty, she was looked upon as one of the most attractive and interesting persons in society.

As malicious tongues maintained, she owed her success for the most part to her extensive knowledge of the secret arts of the toilette. It was whispered that her luxuriant, black hair in which the costly diadem of brilliants sparkled, did not grow upon her head, that the delicate bloom upon her cheeks, the dazzling beauty of her classical neck and bosom were all artificial. But the lustrous fire of her dark eyes, the peculiar charm of her mouth, the slightly roguish smile, the grace of her every movement, the dignity of her aristocratic bearing, were surely not affected, but natural, as even envy had to acknowledge.

But the duchess did not require those external means, she needed neither beauty nor youth in order to command and to charm. Her intellect alone was sufficient to explain her numerous conquests, to assure her success even in her old age, as had been the case with Ninon de L'Enclos and Maintenon.

The favorite niece and sole heiress of a world-renowned diplomatist, under whose eyes she had grown up and received her education, she had not alone inherited her uncle's fabulous wealth, but his genius, his penetration, his keen wit, his wonderful political instinct—so that even the intellectual king, notwithstanding his devoted fidelity to his wife, was numbered among the admirers of the duchess, who, separated from her husband, yielded to her often-changing inclinations.

Less brilliant, but so much the more attractive, did the delicate, fairy-like form of Countess Harrer appear beside the imposing duchess.

Her ethereal form, her small, delicately cut face, with its large, almond-shaped eyes, the almost transparent and still not sickly pallor of her marble complexion, the wonderfully expressive features in which every change of feeling, every thought of her soul, was reflected like a light in a mirror, lent her entire person a shade of poetry, an expression of passionate yearning and enthusiasm almost surprising in such surroundings and such an atmosphere, as if some exotic blossom from a distant zone had found its way into the midst of ordinary plants and flowers.

Even her toilette, although in good taste and according perfectly with the demands of etiquette, betrayed a certain striving for ideal independence. The sea-green silk gown with its garniture of white water-lilies, the costly and yet so simple pearl ornaments in her brown hair, the bouquet of fragrant May-bells in her tiny hand, harmonized with her appearance, which involuntarily recalled the poetical, fabulous "Undine."

With evident interest she listened to the prince's remarks with reference to the famous virtuoso who was that day to give his first concert at the Residence.

For weeks he had been the sole topic of conversation and his appearance was looked upon as an event before which all things else must give way. Daily, not only the musical and social journals, but even the great political ones vouchsafed information as to the wonderful artist—information which was calculated to arouse the interest and the curiosity of the ladies.

They told in society not only of his extraordinary achievements, of his conquest of all technical difficul-

ties, but of the charm of his personal appearance as well, of the irresistible fascination of his conversation, of his strange, almost superhuman power over the minds of others.

In confirmation of those statements, the most adventurous stories and anecdotes were told of him, in which fact and fiction were closely allied. To him was ascribed some magnetic power such as that possessed by the "Pied Piper of Hamelin," who with the tones of his magic flute could entice both old and young, especially women, to the Venusberg.

They named this and that woman from the best circles as a sacrifice to that magician; ladies of the aristocracy, celebrated beauties, authoresses and artists, besides a number of people of minor importance, young girls, women and mothers, who for him had left their families.

The prince more than any other could corroborate the various reports, for the artist was one of his most intimate friends.

"I have known him," said he, with a self-satisfied smile, "since his childhood. My father's castle was the cradle of his talent, as it once afforded Beethoven a shelter."

"Indeed," said the duchess, with a shade of irony. "Your family always patronize art and artists. You yourself are no exception, and follow the example of your respected ancestors."

"We do not bear David's harp in our arms for naught, and, as tradition says, one of the descendants of our house won the heart and hand of a king's daughter by singing and playing, like the noble Norman duke, Taillefer."

"I am almost afraid," smiled the duchess, "that the grandson will lose his heart as lightly."

"Oh!" replied the prince, in surprise, "I possess a talisman which protects me against sirens."

"What is it?"

"Were I to name it, it would probably lose its power. Its virtue lies in the secret being kept."

"I leave the secret to you. Instead, you must tell us of your famous friend. Our little countess is burning with curiosity to know more about him."

"If I am not mistaken, the prince spoke of Beethoven," replied the countess, with apparent indifference, as she waved her ivory fan.

"If you wish, I will tell you of Beethoven, who was likewise a friend of our family and an especial *protégé* of my grandfather. In return for his kindness, he dedicated to him two of his finest sonatas. Finally they disagreed about a trifle."

"Pray, let us hear the reason. I love Beethoven above everything, and take the greatest interest in the most trifling incident relative to him. What would I give had I known him!"

"He would then certainly have produced a second, more expressive 'Moonlight Sonata'."

"I think," said the duchess, "that you would do better to satisfy our curiosity than to pay compliments."

"Very well!" exclaimed the prince. "The great *maestro* was my grandfather's guest; he sought an asylum with him when Vienna was besieged by the French. Very soon the victorious enemy filled the entire land and quartered themselves on our estates. Fortunately, the French general who commanded in our province, was no ordinary *roturier*, but from a good family, refined and educated, and an enthusiastic lover of music."

"A rare quality in a soldier, and in time of war too," said the countess.

"To my grandfather," continued the prince, "that musical passion was doubly agreeable, for it occasioned the general to take every precaution to render the burdens and oppressions of the war lighter for us, for which my grandfather was of course very grateful. As the general had repeatedly expressed the desire to become acquainted with the famous artist of whose presence he was aware, a concert was arranged in his honor, at which Beethoven was to play principally his own compositions. But, for some incomprehensible reason, the artist refused to appear before the French general."

"That is like him," remarked the duchess. "I remember a similar scene from his life."

"In vain did my grandfather beg and implore the obstinate composer, in vain did he promise to repay his every note with gold. Beethoven refused, although at that time he was in the most straitened circumstances and was dependent upon his patron's bounty. For that reason, the latter hoped to overcome his scruples. So, without paying any heed to the stubborn artist's refusal, he sent out invitations to the concert, and counted with certainty upon the co-operation of Beethoven, who was in his debt. The guests arrived promptly, at their head the French general with his brilliant suite."

"And Beethoven did not come?" asked the duchess.

"The hours glided by and still they awaited the artist. The general grew impatient, and my grandfather sent messenger after messenger in search of him. Finally a servant brought him a few illegible lines, scribbled hastily in pencil, which had been found in his room.

He himself, notwithstanding the chilliness of the stormy December night, had flown in a light overcoat."

"And what was the reason for that unpardonable refusal?"

"His note contained only these words:—'I cannot and will not play before my country's enemy'."

"Ah, that was grand, worthy of such an artist!" cried the countess, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"Eccentric, ungrateful!" said the duchess. "Still, we must overlook many things in a genius. Your friend Norin, too, has already driven many patrons of art to despair, although he seems to be less abrupt and more tractable than his great model. He possesses just enough obstinacy and artistic caprice to make him interesting, and that he is indeed. Your family may be just as proud of such a *protégé* as of their friendship with Beethoven."

"As you know," added the prince, "Norin is the son of a traveling musician who one day aroused my mother's compassion. The handsome boy with the pallid cheeks, the feverishly sparkling eyes and the entangled locks awakened her pity, when he, weary and exhausted, accompanied his father's violin upon the harp. She sent for him, and took such a fancy to him that she provided for his education and his musical instruction, while she gave the father a small position in our household. Later on, he came to Paris, where through introductions to our ambassador he obtained a foothold in the best circles and was soon admired as a phenomenon."

"I myself," said the duchess, "heard him in Paris, where he was generally known as *'the new Mozart.'* His appearance was charming, he was as handsome

as a young Cupid, as bright as a demon. The ladies adored and spoiled the haughty youth, and even the men marveled at him. Old Cherubini embraced him in public after the first concert, and declared him to be the greatest musical genius of the day. My uncle said, however: 'He is the Napoleon of the piano, the *Little Corporal* of modern music.'"

"His prophecy, like most of his speeches, was soon fulfilled; the Napoleon of the piano fought battle after battle and conquered all his opponents. Now he is making a triumphant march from land to land, from city to city, and wherever he appears he is well-received. The most prominent men, the handsomest women, press about him; the heads of the Romantic school in Paris have taken him up; Alfred de Musset sings his praises, George Sand deifies him, and all unite in lauding him."

"Your friend is indeed to be envied," murmured the countess.

"You are mistaken, madame," replied the prince. "His restless Faust-like nature does not permit him to enjoy life notwithstanding his successes. Norin is not happy."

'Who is?" said she with a slight sigh.

The prince's mocking reply was lost in the almost deafening cheers which greeted the appearance of the so-anxiously-awaited artist. All eyes, lorgnettes and opera-glasses were turned upon him.

They wished only to see him to convince themselves that rumor had not deceived them, that the reports had not been exaggerated.

Tall and slender, he stood before the public, in the full consciousness of his power over the minds of the easily influenced throng, a born ruler over the domains

of Art, a modern Apollo, whom even the prosaic coat, decorated with the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, could not rob of the nobility of his classical beauty.

His finely-molded face resembled an antique gem from the hand of a Grecian artist, every feature was so characteristic, so expressive. His fair, carefully parted hair fell in soft locks to his shoulders and lent him a certain likeness to the typical Christ's head. His high, pale brow bespoke genius, while his phosphorescently sparkling eyes betokened a deep soul; indeed, their glance was fascinating and at the same time exercised a sort of magnetic charm. An indescribable grace lay in his movements, in the manner in which he bowed before the audience with real, or excellently simulated astonishment at his cordial reception, while a slight, almost childlike and still self-conscious smile played about his graceful mouth.

Such was Norin, the hero of the day.

## II

### THE CONCERT

When the artist had taken off his white kid gloves, he seated himself at the piano and ran his fingers lightly over the keys.

That short prelude announced the master and prepared the public for an exceptional treat.

The first number on the programme was 'The Struggle of Genius," an orchestral symphony transcribed for the piano by the artist himself. The work contained, according to the opinion of those who understood music, technical difficulties which they considered insurmountable. In their eyes such an attempt must prove a failure, for the piano alone could not suffice to produce either the force and fullness of tone of an entire orchestra, or the delicacy of the stringed instruments and the power of the horns and basses. But the genius of a Norin scoffed at their predictions and conquered all obstacles. His hands seemed to be possessed with superhuman strength, so that the delicate instrument developed a never-suspected force and under his management seemed to grow with him.

Unceasingly the struggle continued in wild rage and despair. Entire mankind seemed oppressed beneath the load, and their groans, their cries of anguish, for help, arose to heaven.

The vibrating strings groaned beneath the artist's fingers, distant thunder rolled.

But Genius, Humanity, was not to be trampled under foot in that struggle with Fate. Already rose from the darkness, from doubt, a golden gleam, the dawn of a happier future, a shimmer of approaching salvation. Then, above the abyss, like joyous larks, from the chaos arose voices, first faint and tender, then louder and clearer, into a prayer, a hymn to the Almighty.

But the prayer was not fulfillment—merely comfort and hope. Faith does not give victory, only the strength for it.

Sadly the principal theme of the symphony was repeated, the cries, the sighs of humanity, the Savior's cry of anguish when forsaken.

Softly, scarcely audibly sounded the Adagio portraying fading life, the deepest exhaustion, as if the weary soul, like the wounded warrior, lay bleeding upon the ground, around it circling the shadow of death. Then from its apathy arose the soul to a new life. Freed from the bonds of death, scorning conquest, and, by a mighty crescendo, ascending toward heaven.

The siege was fought, the freed soul rose, and uttered such a song of triumph as never mortal lips had sung—the *Te Deum* of the blessed souls in celebration of saved mankind, the song of Genius, which, by its own strength, had overcome Fate's dark power, and proudly raised its head, crowned with the immortal laurel.

Deep, breathless silence reigned in the large hall, and betrayed the effect produced more than would the loudest applause. Here and there a pretty eye glistened, a bosom heaved, a tender heart beat more quickly than usual. But the lovely Countess Harrer was affected more than anyone by the master's wonderful playing.

She herself was possessed of rare musical talent and comprehension of the art, so that she knew how to appreciate the great virtuoso's performance. She had never heard its equal, had never considered such execution possible. The music had upon the sensitively organized woman a peculiar effect. She felt all the sufferings of Genius, she made the same struggle in her own soul. As the music seemed to combat and implore, she did the same; she lay exhausted upon the ground, rose to heaven, and hovered in the purest ether. She really fancied she was soaring, and involuntarily she closed her eyes, as if seized with sudden dizziness.

A nervous shudder passed over her, and yet, at the same time, she felt a bliss never experienced before. From that excitement she was suddenly aroused by the fanatical yells of the audience, whose enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Flowers and wreaths fell at the virtuoso's feet. A scarcely perceptible smile hovered about his lips and lighted up his face, as he received the public's homage.

As if crowned by an invisible glory, he stood there, the god of the day, in the midst of his worshipers. The countess, too, followed the general impulse, for she timidly threw toward the virtuoso the costly bunch of May-bells which she held in her hand. At that moment she met a glance from his glowing eyes. Involuntarily she blushed and drew back in her box, but she saw, or rather felt, that his magnetic eyes followed her.

Her cheeks glowed, and her heart throbbed as violently as if she had committed a wrong. Her embarrassment increased still more when, at that moment,

the door opened, and in it appeared the tall form of an elderly gentleman in the military uniform of an officer of high rank.

He greeted the duchess and the prince with a courtly bow, and with a kindly smile offered his strong hand to the countess, whose slender one trembled in its clasp like an aspen leaf.

It was her husband, Count Harrer, who stood so unexpectedly before her.

His deliberate, almost severe manner contrasted strangely with his wife's youthful beauty and grace. His entire form seemed as if molded out of iron, his tanned face was like bronze, every feature betrayed the frank, energetic, soldierly nature, the consciousness of the fulfillment of his duties and pride in his military honor.

Nothwithstanding the difference in their ages, the countess had chosen him, her father's friend, in preference to many a younger suitor, and she had not regretted her choice, for the count was highly respected and loved her devotedly.

Her every wish was fulfilled by him before it was even expressed, all his thoughts were consecrated to her happiness. There was something touching in that almost idolatrous worship, in the affection of that otherwise so reserved man, as if he felt the necessity of making her forget, by redoubled tenderness, the inequality of their ages and their views of life.

The countess was grateful to him for such love, and returned it with the greatest respect and exemplary fidelity. Not the slightest shadow of suspicion sullied her pure life, and the busy tongue of scandal was silenced with regard to her.

The couple's happiness seemed enviable; but there,

too, the bitter drop in the golden cup of pleasure was not lacking. Their marriage was childless, a misfortune which the countess at first felt more than her husband, for he found a substitute in his love and his profession.

With time she too had submitted to the inevitable, for she had filled the void within her with art and poetry. For diversion, she busied herself with literature and art; she drew and painted under the guidance of a well-known artist; but she soon gave up that study, for, according to her opinion, she did not possess the necessary talent, and dilettanteism was disgusting to her.

For a time she read, or, rather, devoured the newest literary productions, especially the poetry of Heine, of the French Romanticists, the psychological social studies of Balzac, and the sensational, passionate and soul-stirring romances of George Sand, which at that time were arousing the greatest surprise.

Unconsciously she imbibed the sweet poison which was offered her, in its most complete form.

Still, her better judgment protected her from the errors to which so many women under similar circumstances had yielded.

The men, too, with whom she associated, were not calculated to interest her. Young officers with their idle chatter of advancement and of the races, the shallow councilors of the embassy and embryo diplomatists were more distasteful to her than ever. They did not understand her anguish, the secret sorrow of her soul.

For one winter she plunged into society and tried to drown her trouble, but she soon wearied of the hollow amusements, and retired as much as she possibly could

from social life. In solitude her early love for music, which of late she had neglected, revived. With enthusiasm she resumed her old studies; in the master pieces of the great composers, especially in Beethoven, she found, or thought she found, the specific for her soul.

She reveled in the magical kingdom of tones, giving every feeling expression in music.

For all those inclinations and moods, the count, with his disposition, had no sympathy. He allowed her to take her course without any interference on his part. He himself scoffed good-naturedly at his lack of appreciation, and confessed with naïve candor that he preferred a lively march, an old soldier's song, to Beethoven's grandest sonata, to all the songs of Schubert and Mendelssohn, to the finest concert.

Even on this especial day he had intended to make no exception, although the artist had a wonderful reputation, and the countess had repeatedly requested him to accompany her.

Her disappointment on account of his refusal, which, as she drove away, she could not entirely suppress, caused him to regret his decision, so that he followed her later on, in order to surprise her and to prove his love for his adored wife, rather than his liking for art.

He now sat by the side of the beautiful Ada without sharing her enthusiasm, without comprehending the admiration of the throng, and of which, in his candid manner, he made no secret.

For the first time in her life the countess was ashamed and blushed at her husband's narrowness. She must make the best of it, she must suffer him to speak of art like a barbarian and to be looked upon as such by her friends.

In order to escape those annoying thoughts she buried herself so much the more deeply and passionately in the pleasure which he scorned. Each successive number on the programme was a new triumph for the artist, and if possible, increased the enthusiasm of the public and her own admiration for him.

At the close of the last number, the hall rang with applause; Norin came forward while the men greeted him with ringing cheers; the ladies greeted him with the silent but more complimentary acknowledgment of their hearts.

As the countess rose, she turned toward him once more as if impelled by some secret power. Suddenly she started, and a burning blush suffused her delicate cheeks.

On the virtuoso's breast, she saw a bunch of Maybells. Of all the floral offerings he had honored her bouquet alone.

## III

### THE MEETING

The concert was ended, the excited audience left the hall, and rushed in wild haste into the cloak-room, where the servants in livery were waiting with mantles and warm wraps.

An invisible spectator might have made interesting studies, might have overheard many a secret.

In order to pass the time, the liveried gentlemen chatted about the gentlemen in uniforms and made some not very flattering remarks about the members of the aristocracy. The servant of Prince von Schwarzfels, —"*handsome Henry*," as he was called by his envious colleagues—could tell a great many of the adventures of his master, whom he tried to copy in speech, carriage and manner. So he enjoyed in his sphere the same fame and respect as did his model in the fashionable world.

'Yes! Yes!" said the Don Juan of the lackey world, with a self-satisfied smile. "We have admirable good fortune with the ladies."

"And wonderful debts," remarked an envious colleague.

"Bah! You know nothing about it. A true cavalier must have debts as well as ancestors. Such trifles do not annoy the aristocrats and when every resource fails, when the creditors grow impatient, when neither Jew nor Gentile will lend us any money, then there will be time enough to make a brilliant match."

"And to marry that old hag, the painted duchess," said the malicious valet, amid the resounding laughter of the other servants.

"You are a fool," replied the Duchess von Taland's serving-man angrily, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. "One can see and hear that you are employed by an old money-bag, a converted Jew."

"We can not suffer such low remarks," added handsome Henry. "Let us cuff the democrat's ears and put him out of doors."

"Do not come near me!" exclaimed the furious valet, "or you will regret it. You know, if I wish to speak the word, I can have you put in jail."

The unexpected threat seemed indeed not to be groundless, judging from its effect. Handsome Henry turned pale and his uplifted hand fell to his side, while he attempted to hide his embarrassment behind an affected smile.

Unfortunately at that moment the concert ended and the appearance of the masters and mistresses interrupted the interesting dispute and the eagerly awaited disclosures. The conversation ceased at once, and each man hastened to his post with as unconcerned an air as possible. Old Frederick, the count's servant, alone needed not to assume an expression of faithfulness and respect, for his honest face was naturally respectful. With his military stiffness, his erect carriage and taciturnity, he formed a striking contrast to the rest. From his hands the count took the warm shawl which he wrapped with paternal solicitude about the white shoulders of his charming wife, in order to protect her from the cold night-air.

Prince von Schwarzfels did the same for his companion, the Duchess of Taland. With his assistance

she enveloped herself in the costly sables, leaned coquettishly upon his arm, and laughed and jested with him, while her servant and handsome Henry exchanged knowing glances. The couple were not unnoticed, and in spite of the large crowd they attracted considerable attention, as the prince as well as the duchess belonged to the notables of the Residence and their relations were the talk of the town.

With that contempt for public opinion characteristic of a lady of an exclusive set, the duchess yielded to her new attachment, which she tried to conceal as little as her earlier connections.

She loved the prince with the reckless passion of an old woman who had no more time to lose, and who acknowledged the value and importance of the passing moment.

No sacrifice was too great for her love; and it was whispered in society that the wealthy duchess had already paid out fabulous sums in order to free the prince from his pecuniary embarrassments. Principally to her influence did he owe his position, both social and political. She was in fact his supporter, his protector and adviser in all weighty matters.

Proud of her brilliant conquest, of having so late in life attained such a triumph as to attract that handsome young man, she made no secret of her fondness for him. She was pleased to have the prince pay her attention in public, to have him help her with her wraps in the cloak-room and to offer her his arm, in order to conduct her to her equipage.

His gallantry was not disregarded and seemed especially to interest a lady who, hidden behind a pillar in the vestibule, followed the pair with a restless glance.

She could do so easily, for a black lace veil and a

hood concealed her face so well that neither ner age nor her countenance could be discerned. The strange woman stood near enough to hear every word, even the slightest whisper.

No one noticed the unknown, who leaned like a marble statue against the Ionian pillar. She indeed seemed turned to stone. Only a slight, imperceptible tremor of the slender form betrayed that a heart was beating violently within that statue.

Had not her face been covered by the black veil, her features, distorted by pain and hatred, would have inspired as much horror as a Medusa's head. and would have caused the smiles of the handsome prince and his aristocratic companion to die upon their lips.

As the duchess laughed aloud at some remark made by her youthful friend, the dark stranger uttered a sigh.

Separated by only a step were the greatest suffering and the greatest pleasure, happiness and misery, despair and bliss.

It was too much, the unhappy stranger could bear it no longer.

She tried to escape the hated sight, but her limbs refused to do their duty, and against her will she was rooted to the spot. She could have cried aloud, but only a hollow sound escaped her bosom, her throat closed convulsively.

A dark cloud passed before her eyes, her senses left her, and she fell in a swoon at the foot of a pillar.

Fortunately her condition attracted the attention of a young man near by; at once he hastened to her aid and raised the unconscious woman from the floor. With his strong arm he led, or rather bore her through the crowd to the house of the intendant of the Academy, with whom he was well acquainted.

"A lady has fainted!" cried the crowd, half indifferently, half compassionately, for such an occurrence at such a time was quite common. "The heat in the hall was suffocating too," said the prince unconcernedly.

"And the excitement not less great," added the duchess.

"Another sacrifice to your demoniacal friend, Norin, of which the newspapers to-morrow will tell and make of it an advertisement."

At that moment the unconscious woman was borne past the pair, so closely that the hem of her black dress almost touched the prince. As the veil and hood had been pushed aside somewhat, he caught a glimpse of the marble-like, interesting features of the woman, which seemed to awaken a passing memory.

Involuntarily his cheeks grew pale; he turned away to hide his feelings, which, however, had not escaped the duchess' keen, jealous glance.

"What ails you, prince?" she asked mistrustfully.

"Nothing, nothing at all!" he stammered in confusion, striving apparently for self-control.

"The air here is indeed dangerous," she replied ironically. "We will not remain any longer. Come!"

Mechanically he followed his companion to her carriage, in which he with secret chagrin took his seat beside her, in order to spend the evening in her company. The count and countess likewise left the cloak-room less happy than when they came. The latter especially seemed low-spirited, and put forth her plea of "headache" as an excuse for her silence.

"That Norin alone is to blame," said her husband, half in jest, half in earnest; "that detestable virtuoso is upsetting the entire world, and I am not at all surprised that women with sensitive nerves can not stand

his exciting music; they either fall ill or lose consciousness. The police should forbid his concerts."

In the meantime, the young man with his lovely burden had reached the intendant's dwelling, and had placed the unconscious woman in the care of the man's kind-hearted wife, who succeeded in gradually restoring life and consciousness. Color came into the pallid cheeks, the closed eyes opened and glanced at the strange surroundings. A slight sigh escaped her bosom and a flood of tears relieved the heavy heart, as a shower after a storm cools the atmosphere.

Veil and hood were laid aside, and with increasing sympathy her protector watched the movements of the interesting stranger. Her entire appearance bore the stamp of something exceptional, and that impression was increased by the peculiar situation. The pale face, framed by the loosened black hair, the dark, sparkling eyes, the painfully-quivering lips, the well-developed bust, with the lovely, classical neck, afforded the looker-on a surprising as well as a pleasing sight.

Exhausted and leaning back in an arm-chair she sat there silent and brooding, like a beautiful, dark problem, as if she were still trying to gather her scattered thoughts.

Deep silence reigned in the room, broken only by her irregular breathing and the ticking of the old Schwarzwald clock upon the wall.

He dared not break the silence, but satisfied himself by casting from time to time a surreptitious glance full of sympathy at the pretty, bowed form, which in its sorrow charmed him so magically. The intendant's good wife was still busied about her, and brought her from her medicine-chest various restoratives, drops for her nerves and sweet-smelling essences.

"Thank you," whispered the unknown, with a faint, pleasant smile; "I am putting you to so much trouble. A glass of water is all that I care for."

When the woman disappeared to fetch the water, she for the first time fixed her beaming eyes upon her protector, whom she seemed just to have noticed.

"Ah!" she whispered, "my rescuer! If I am not mistaken, you brought me hither from the crowd Pardon me for not thanking you sooner, but my poor head feels so badly; I still feel as weak and confused as if I had arisen from the dead. A swoon is certainly the precursor of death. Forgive my rudeness."

"Neither an apology nor thanks are necessary Any one would have done the same for you."

"Ah! the crowd pass a prostrate one unsympathetically, and the good Samaritan is an exception."

"You are severe in your judgment, and must have had painful experiences in order to take such a sad view of life."

"I am a woman, and women are born to suffer," said she gloomily.

He felt impelled to continue the interesting conversation in order to learn more as to the fate of the stranger, but to his sorrow the return of the intendant's wife interrupted the conversation just at the moment when he hoped to learn more about her from her own lips.

Although the conversation had been brief, those few words had sufficed to arouse his sympathy.

As she smoothed the blue-black locks of hair and drew together the dress which had fallen away from her dazzling neck, she spoke to the young man as she would to an old friend, without any embarrassment.

"You will surely," said she, with a candor peculiar to

her, "not consider me curious if I inquire the name of my noble protector. Your name shall remind me of my debt, which I will repay sooner or later."

"My name is Steiner," replied the young man.

"Steiner!" cried she, with evident astonishment. "Not Frederick Steiner, the well-known author!"

"The same," replied the modest man, with a shade of embarrassment.

"Oh! How glad I am that you, just you—"

She did not complete her sentence, as if she feared to degrade the honored man by vulgar flattery; but the warm tone of her voice betrayed her admiration more than words could have done. Involuntarily she held out to him both hands, whose strong, almost masculine, pressure gave him an electric shock.

Her sparkling eyes rested searchingly upon the intellectual, noble face of the young *savant*, whose pale cheeks glowed.

"It is strange," said she pensively, "that Fate—still, there is no Fate. But I believe that our meeting has more significance than we think it has at the present moment. We will—we must meet again."

Before he could reply and ask her name in return, she disappeared through the door and entered the carriage, which bore her away much too swiftly to please the young man.

## IV

### THE CLIQUE

Lost in thought, the young scholar was passing along the deserted streets of the Residence, when he suddenly heard his name pronounced and was accosted by several acquaintances. They asked him to accompany them to a certain restaurant in the neighborhood, where, as a rule, the party-men and leaders of literature, authors, artists, their friends and admirers, were in the habit of assembling after the theater.

They would not listen to his excuse that it was too late and that he was not in the mood, so he was drawn along with them almost involuntarily, for in truth the tone of the company was distasteful to him for various reasons.

The restaurant had with time attained a certain fame for being the assembly-place of the intellectual element of the Residence.

Here met principally scattered bands, the degenerate pupils of that great philosopher whose system had for several decades ruled not only public opinion, but even the State, and enjoyed at the same time a sort of monopoly.

After the death of that great thinker, his system deteriorated more and more and fell into anarchy. His pupils saved nothing from the wreck but the dialectic proficiency and self-deification of their master. Themselves too weak and powerless to build a new king-

dom upon the ruins of that world of thought, nothing remained for them but doubt, negation, and disgust of life.

That mood harmonized thoroughly with the general discontent with regard to political and social laws, and found, to a certain extent, an echo in the general misery.

The real representative of that school was a former friend of the young scholar, intellectual Doctor Bergemann, one of the most capable and gifted minds among those modern sophists, but who was spoiled by immoderate vanity and frivolity.

About that man rallied his numerous friends and admirers, young students, embryo literary men, idlers, mistaken talent—all those men who in large cities wander aimlessly about in search of some prominent personage upon whom to quarter themselves and to whom they trust to raise them from their own insignificance.

There were too many half-indifferent, half-curious, among those at the restaurant in the evening, to be able to take part in the interesting and intellectual conversation. The restaurant was called "The Temple;" the small room in which only the most favored guests were permitted to sit, "The Holy of Holies;" the buffet, "The Altar;" the landlord, "The High-Priest," and the waiters, "The Deacons," in mockery of pious customs and honored institutions.

But beneath these frivolous jests was a vein of deep seriousness, a surprising and seductive abundance of intellect, wit and dazzling paradoxy.

Amid bold jesting and laughter the most important questions were discussed, the highest interests of society treated of in a manner which filled the listeners alternately with admiration and disgust. Wine filled

the glasses, champagne sparkled, hot grog steamed, the eyes of the drinkers gleamed, their cheeks glowed, and the intoxicated mind celebrated a wanton Bacchanal.

Since that current had gained the upper hand, the young scholar had shunned the once so pleasant circle and his once intimate friend, Doctor Bergemann; for he could not approve of their erring ways. Between the two closely allied companions a coldness had crept without, however, causing a complete rupture.

Steiner's appearance therefore in the "Holy of Holies" attracted general attention, which was owing as much to his long absence as to his respected and celebrated personality.

Even vain Doctor Bergemann, who envied him his fame, stretched out to him his hand with an affected smile, and invited him, in what was meant to be a friendly way, to take the seat of honor beside him.

On that day, as was usual after a new performance, or at the first appearance of some celebrated artist, there were a number of guests present in order to talk over the events of the day, or to obtain the opinion of the literary leader.

At the head table sat the principals of the "Clique;" amongst them journalists, authors, editors and critics of the most influential newspapers; at their head the admired Doctor Bergemann, the Dalai-Lama of that modern brotherhood, like a divinity enveloped in a cloud, not of incense but of cigar smoke. Before him stood a glass of hot grog, from which occasionally he took copious draughts. From time to time he nodded his wise head in token of agreement with one or the other of his fanatical admirers, or with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders expressed his disapprobation.

As yet, he maintained silence; the time had not come for him to speak.

The subject of that heated debate was the artist who had just been heard—about whose musical talent there had arisen much discussion. While on the one side the greatest praise was lavished upon him, his adversaries tried to make light of his great talent, although they acknowledged that his technic was wonderful.

The best critics and musicians joined in the dispute. In order to prove their opinions, the combating party were forced to even discuss the principles of art and the weightiest questions of esthetic science.

Then, only from that higher standpoint, did the young *savant* take an interest in the struggle, for up to that time his thoughts had been preoccupied with the adventure of that day—with his meeting with the strange lady.

Although he in no way underrated the importance of the celebrated artist, he had during the concert formed an opinion of the dangers of modern *virtuosodom*, which he could not refrain from expressing, as the matter became worth participating in.

"The nature, the essence of art," said he, "is the revelation of the divine idea in the earthly form, and therefore it coincides originally with the religion and culture of the people. The first artist was the Priest of the Highest; his song a hymn, his work a sacrifice offered to the Godhead. Temples and the pictures of gods were the first creations of genius, songs of consecration flowed from the lips of pious poets, and about the holy altar hovered the choir. To that origin Art in all lands and all times has remained true, in India and Egypt, in Greece and Rome, in the ancient world and in the romantic Middle Ages. Even the present

cannot escape that influence, though it be tinged with doubt. To-day, as a thousand years ago, Art preserves her religious character, is, or should be at least, the priestess of the divine idea of truth and of beauty. But where that main condition of her nature is lacking, where she denies her divine origin—then, even when she stands beside the greatest, most admirable talent, she becomes a caricature; she sinks into *virtuosodom*, the representative of which that Norin, notwithstanding his great gifts and all his geniality, seems to me to be!"

As Steiner in that manner expressed his opinion of the interesting hero of the day, a respectful silence was maintained.

But critical Doctor Bergemann looked upon it as his duty, at the conclusion of his former friend's speech, to contest his views of art and to hold them up to ridicule.

"The devil!" he exclaimed in his high voice, "leave me in peace with your accursed religion and everything pertaining to it. Religion did not influence art, but, rather, man made her. She is an abortion of a heated brain; between us, a great imprudence committed in the years of the youthful indiscretion of humanity. Can you deny that first of all fear and ignorance, later on conceit and self-deification, awake the belief in the supernatural? Priests gave the Indians and Egyptians their idols, artists and poets the Greeks their gods. Homer peopled Olympus, and Phidias created after him his Olympian Zeus; from a hero or a statesman came a Jupiter, and a handsome woman served as a model for Venus. The genius of the people is reflected in those gods; they are large and handsome; people who revel in nectar and ambrosia,

who descend to earth from their heights, and with the daughters of earth enjoy the happiness of life and love."

"Such a religion is acceptable," slyly whispered the stout adjutant. "Of all the gods I know, I prefer old Jupiter, who to-day changes to a bull, to-morrow to a swan. Long live the holy Don Juan!"

"Long live the holy Don Juan!" cried the chorus of the Clique, clinking glasses.

Although the young *savant* did not wish to continue the debate, he saw no other way of defending the truth than by replying.

The discussion had involuntarily assumed a personal form and had excited the entire assembly. Parties had been formed for and against it, and the result was breathlessly awaited. One young student in particular seemed to be interested in Steiner, and his features betrayed the deepest sympathy. It would have been cowardly to have held back and to have allowed the lie to win.

Steiner made another speech in which he upheld truth, beauty and art.

Doctor Bergemann laughed mockingly and replied:

"What is truth? What is true to-day will be false to-morrow. Morality changes with the times and the people. Genius cares not for your moral dogmas. It is just as absurd to expect morality in an artist like that Norin, as to expect virtue in an Alexander or a Cæsar. Only a great personality is absolute, and the pure *I* the only true God."

With a demoniacal smile Doctor Bergemann concluded his speech which, even in that circle, aroused unusual wonder by its boldness. No one was more moved than the young scholar.

"The pure *I* is the only true God," cried a philosophical young fellow, repeating his great brother's words.

"There lies the God!" at the same moment cried a deep voice, two strong arms seized the daring man, raised him from his seat, and amid the resounding laughter of those present, dropped him upon the floor.

The unexpected demonstration called forth an indescribable storm; while the members of the Clique hastened to the fallen man's aid and threatened the bold assailant, the latter stood in the midst of that sea of people as calm and firm as a rock.

Steiner too cast a surprised, almost mistrustful glance at his champion. It was the young student; his tall form, notwithstanding its youthfulness, had something imposing about it, while his frank face attracted.

With folded arms, he seemed to be awaiting an attack. But the more prudent members of the society, above all Steiner, to whom that intermezzo was doubly painful, sought to calm the tumult by their interference.

With difficulty did they finally succeed in preventing the scandal of a public fight, the student assisting, by offering the insulted man all satisfaction, and with that object handed the latter his card, which bore the name of *Walter Hellwig*.

Then, together with Steiner, he left the restaurant.

"How came you," asked the young *savant*, "to interfere in that quarrel, and in a manner which I in no way approve of?"

"Because I have learned to love and honor you from your writings, because I could no longer listen to such bold denunciation."

"You have, for my sake, got yourself into a scrape which may have the most unpleasant results for you."

"I do not care," replied Hellwig. "I am glad that I finally had an opportunity of proving to you my admiration, even if I should have to bear a scar afterward."

Steiner felt involuntarily drawn toward his new acquaintance, whose valor formed a striking contrast to the frivolity of Doctor Bergemann's clique. With a hearty shake of the hand he parted from his new friend, meditating on the odd adventures and occurrences of the evening which contrasted so strangely with his hitherto so quiet life.

# V

## THE AGENT

A few days after those events the famous Norin sat in his elegant apartments busied with a new composition. The furniture bespoke veritable princely luxury, the highest refinement, so that his study resembled the boudoir of a woman of the world rather than the work-room of an artist. He loved to surround himself with every comfort, with voluptuous pictures, with a hundred and one fashionable trifles, with costly bronzes, statuettes and antiquities, to breathe an atmosphere of brilliancy and extravagance, for his spoiled nature required such charms and such constant excitement.

His muse was the goddess of caprice, fickle and always seeking new impressions and excitement. Now he raved over the ancient world, over classical beauty, over the Venuses of Milo, over the Dianas of the Louvre, copies of which looked down upon him from the walls; now he plunged deeply into the romantic Middle Ages and its poetry, by collecting about him rare miniatures, old weapons and naïve holy pictures. Again, his impressionable fancy reveled in the brilliant period of the Renaissance.

All his treasures hung and lay scattered about. Images of gods, rare jugs of fine metal, silver cups of Italian and French workmanship, casts from the antique, mediæval wood-carvings, modern bronzes,

statues of the most celebrated poets and musicians, among them the death-mask of Beethoven. The writing-desk at which Norin sat was covered with letters, newspapers, and note-paper.

He wore an exquisite morning-dress, a short house-jacket of black velvet with a white rolling shirt-collar. His long locks were carefully parted, so that he involuntarily reminded one of the well-known picture of Raphael's violin-player. Before him, in a porcelain vase, stood a bouquet of May-bells.

From time to time he inhaled their perfume with evident enjoyment, and seemed to draw from them his musical inspiration. Hastily his pen flew over the paper, and a smile of satisfaction lingered upon his interesting face. Occasionally he rose from the writing-desk and walked to the open piano in order to try the melody which had just occurred to him. Sometimes the work did not proceed, and he sank into deep meditation, his handsome head leaning artistically upon his well cared-for hand.

A light tap at the door aroused him from his dreams or memories. Upon his invitation to enter, appeared the virtuoso's factotum, the Italian Giuseppe, who in his person combined the various characters of house-steward, private secretary, claquer and advertiser, and by that means exercised great influence over the virtuoso.

Giuseppe Bertini was a born impresario and theater-agent, sly, reckless, full of energy where it concerned his master's interests; with him he was hand-in-glove, for he received a large share of the profits.

Without any musical or literary culture, he was possessed of wonderful penetration, an extraordinary knowledge of persons and things in the artistic world,

an indefatigable activity, with which he put aside every obstacle and assured his master's successes. He was never intimidated by anything; calmly he pursued his object, which he almost always attained, if not in a direct way.

He cared entirely for his artist and did everything for him that he dared not do himself in his position. From Giuseppe emanated all the wonderful advertisements in the papers; he invented with admirable skill, those innumerable stories and piquant anecdotes, by means of which he kept the public in continual excitement. He, too, knew how to gain public favor, to win over the critics by flattery, when it could be done, and when not, by money.

In a word, he was his master's shadow. He followed him on his every step like a modern Mephistopheles in the foot-prints of a Faust.

"What is it, Giuseppe?" asked the artist, looking up from his work.

"Pardon, maestro," replied the Italian, "if I am disturbing you, but business—"

"You know I have nothing to do with business. You must settle that with my banker. Still I should like to know how the last receipts footed up.

"Three hundred ducats, with mine deducted. We may be satisfied for a beginning."

"I hope it will be better. What news is there—what do the papers have to offer?"

"The story of a lady swooning at your concert. It is making a great sensation and will do good work."

"Probably one of your inventions," laughed the virtuoso.

"No, no, maestro! This time I am innocent. The lady indeed fainted without my co-operation. Of

course I used the incident to our advantage and embellished it somewhat."

"What had the critics to say of the concert?"

"Fine things! I looked out for that. The German bears like honey, if they do grumble. Now they are singing your praises with one accord. All the newspapers laud you to the skies, the public is enthusiastic, and the ladies, ah, the ladies are enraptured."

With those words the Italian made a grimace and simpered.

"What do I care?" replied the virtuoso indifferently. "I have had enough of such things."

'Every tree has its worm, every position its annoyances. We dare not scorn the ladies. They are our best customers. They rave, chatter, gossip, and make us famous. Do them the favor of allowing the poor creatures to adore you. Since yesterday we have received basketfuls of love-letters, flowers and poems."

"You can answer them."

"That is no small job; it will require a great exertion. You have the pleasure and I the trouble. And from whence am I to obtain all the locks of hair?"

"You must obtain a fresh supply from the hairdresser," said Norin.

"Per bacco! I will do so! Oh! you are a rogue! What a joke it will be to have them wear upon their bosoms in golden medallions the hair of some rascal or beggar! But that is not all. What shall we do with the invitations? We have received not less than twenty from excellencies, counts, and barons, from wealthy people, Jews, and Gentiles. One banker offers fifty zechini if you will honor his soirée with your presence and play for him."

"Of course you refused him?"

"I did not. With your permission I accepted. Zechini are not to be found on the streets and the money is soon earned."

"I shall not go there though you promised a hundred times."

"Come, my friend! You will go there and play, because you must."

"Rascal!" exclaimed the virtuoso. "I am tired of being led by you like a child; you seem to forget that I alone can decide and give orders here."

"Do you think so?" replied the Italian with cutting sarcasm, while his eyes gleamed and the dark veins upon his forehead swelled with rage. "I alone have made you what you are, have drawn you from nothing, have founded your good-fortune. Without me you would have proved a failure in Paris, like thousands of others, in spite of all your testimonials. With my aid you conquered all intrigues, all rivals. I have done everything for you, spared no pains, no labor, and have gone through fire and water. But you have to deal with no fool. Oh! I have anticipated this, and well know what measures to take. Try once without me and see how far you will get. The egg wishes to be more sensible than the hen. But I can overthrow you as easily as I raised you from the dust. I know all the by-ways and back-stairs by means of which one mounts to the Temple of Fame. Experience is a good teacher. Another will know how to appreciate my services and in four weeks' time you shall have a rival before whom your reputation shall pale. You shall repent of your treatment of me."

With those words the revengeful Italian turned toward the door in order to carry out his threat at once, but the virtuoso, although deeply wounded, tried

to detain him, for he could not spare the sly negotiator.

He knew from his own experience what power was at the reckless agent's command, and that he was only too ready to make use of every allowable and not allowable means which would help him to attain his object.

Giuseppe had only spoken the truth, when he reminded Norin of the past. To him principally did he owe his present fame, his brilliant position, and large receipts. There was no lack of envious colleagues for whom a man like Bertini would have been a great acquisition. No one else understood the art of advertising, of overcoming all difficulties as he did. Moreover, he knew all the weaknesses, all the secrets of his master whose right hand he was, an accommodating, double-edged tool, as ready to be of use, as to harm. To him Bertini was the second if not the better half of his life, the necessary lever with which to clear all hindrances and annoyances out of the way; a moral lightning-conductor which kept at a distance all clouds and impure vapors, and permitted Norin to revel in the clear, pure ether of art without any fear.

Those reasons therefore impelled him to surrender, although he was weary of that continual submission, and his better nature revolted at the connection.

"Giuseppe!" said the virtuoso, pleasantly. "Do not be a fool! We were both wrong and it would be well to forget our little disagreement."

"A good word always finds a good place and costs nothing. I am not stubborn and gladly accept your proffered hand. Wisdom brings peace, and peace blessings. Our interests go hand-in-hand and a golden chain binds firmer than iron."

"You will not be offended? I meant nothing by my words."

"Words are not blows. The wounds inflicted by the tongue heal quicker than those inflicted by the dagger. Peace is concluded."

"And you will not leave me?"

"Where should I go? We belong together like the Siamese twins, and cannot be separated and live. What you enjoy, nourishes me, and what harms you, makes me ill. One hand washes the other, and both wash the face. You can spare me as little as I you; you are my oil and I am your lamp, the ladder which serves to bear you upward and which you can not push aside without falling from the heights. I know the world, and how to handle it. He who is sly, attains the goal, and he who can conquer one difficulty can besiege thousands."

The sly agent's torrent of words was interrupted by the entrance of Prince von Schwarzfels who wearily sank into the nearest chair, after having greeted the virtuoso.

"Well," said he with a smile, "how is the favorite of the gods, the spoiled child of the Muses, the pet of the ladies? Ah, you are the happiest and I the most miserable of men. My weary feet wander among the thorns of politics, while yours hover among perfumed roses and are borne from one triumph to another."

"And all I owe to your friendship and the kindness of your respected family, to whom I am deeply indebted."

"What they did for you was a mere trifle. Do not speak to me of debts; the word spoils my appetite. Let us rather speak of your successes, or of the women. But no! Women are no better than debts; they are

only another kind of debts which molest us with stormy premonitions. One cannot free oneself from either if once one has any connection with them, and yet one cannot do without them. They grow over our heads and draw us into ruin sooner or later."

"You are in your Hamlet mood to day. I can scarcely recognize gay Prince Egon. What ails your excellence?"

"Do not ask me," replied the prince with a comical and yet serious sigh. "Perhaps I will tell you some day what troubles me. I slept badly and had a horrible dream. I dreamed of an old love. Such remembrances are not pleasant, and I do not wish to annoy you with them. Besides, I am afraid I shall disturb your work and prevent the birth of some immortal masterpiece. If I am not mistaken, you are working at a new composition."

"Only a trifle, a simple song without words," replied the composer with embarrassment.

"So much the better! The Duchess von Taland commissioned me to invite you to her next soirée, which the king will likewise honor with his presence. His majesty, who is a great lover of art, raves over you, my dear friend! The Grand-Duchess Alexandrine, who is much too intelligent for a great lady, shares his enthusiasm, and calls you the 'resurrected Gluck;' she wishes to do as much for you as the lovely, unfortunate Marie Antoinette did for your great compatriot in Paris. Between us, she intends to ensnare you for her gallery of rare beasts, or to embalm you for her museum of immortals. The cross of honor and the title of a royal music-director you will surely not fail to obtain. Your position in the *Capelle* will be as good as assured, if you only wish to have it so."

"I do not scorn royal patronage, although I should not like to give up my independence which I have hitherto maintained."

"There you are wrong, dear Norin! Art requires protection, and it is always better to serve one master than a thousand-headed monster with its caprices. You will, therefore, do well if you try to enter the king's good graces by dedicating some composition to him. I will gladly help you. Come! Let me know the title, that I may put it upon my programme at once."

"May-bells!" said the artist, with some hesitation.

"Charming! That sounds so full of promise, so spring-like, so sunny, so romantic. Just what his majesty likes! May-bells! That will make a sensation; it will turn all heads and hearts. Where did you get these piquant titles? No doubt behind it lies some secret; I should like to wager that those May-bells hide some story of love."

Suddenly the prince's eyes fell upon the vase containing Countess Harrer's bouquet. It only needed that discovery to make all clear to him.

"*Voilà!*" cried he, laughing. "Now I am on the right path; the bouquet has betrayed you; I saw it yesterday in Countess Harrer's hands, so we have her to thank for that fresh gift of genius."

"What are you thinking of?" cried the virtuoso in surprise. "I swear to you that I have heard the lady's name for the first time from your lips, that I have never seen her, do not know her."

"Then you will be so much the more grateful to me if I give you the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the lovely woman. You shall be introduced to her at the duchess' soirée, on the condition that you

play your 'May-bells' there for the first time. Will you accept my proposition? You can safely count on my discretion. I may then tell the duchess that you will come and play?"

"It will be a great honor," replied the virtuoso with a bow.

"Then it is settled! It is a pity that I have not the time to spare to listen to the charming composition now. I must leave you in order to be present at a meeting at which the president's bell calls to order. *Addio, caro maestro!* Dream of the fair fairy and let us hear your 'May-bells' soon."

With a smile the prince bowed and left the artist alone with the image of the countess, whom he soon would meet.

# VI

## TABLEAUX

The Duchess of Taland's palace streamed with light; stairs, hall, and corridors were transformed into a veritable flower-garden, and the rarest tropical plants charmed forth an artificial spring in the midst of winter. The air was warm, soft, and filled with perfume. Whatever refined luxury combined with the most excellent taste could offer, was offered there, and the fabulous wealth of the duchess enabled her to turn her rooms into fairy-like palaces, and to give the most brilliant gatherings at the Residence.

The most magnificent treasures of art were there collected, costly pictures by old and modern masters hung upon the walls. An entire gallery of crowned heads, which her uncle, the great diplomatist, had received as presents from the originals.

Not less interesting and valuable were the busts and statues of finest marble, each possessed of some peculiar history.

These objects of art were surrounded by the great luxury and tastefulness of soft carpets, furniture of the finest workmanship, rich hangings, and those things which constitute the furnishings of a palatial residence, all in harmony one with another.

The rooms were gradually filled with the invited guests, with the *élite* of society, representing birth, wealth, beauty and talent, with the aristocrats of the

land, crowned heads, the diplomatic corps, and the military *charges*, with gold-embroidered uniforms and dazzling nonentities, as well as with the true nobility of science and art.

Into such an assembly the celebrated artist entered with that assurance which he had acquired in his association with the best society in Paris.

The duchess greeted him with her complaisant smile, while the prince, who here played the part of master of ceremonies, offered him his hand familiarly. His reception could not have been more flattering, all eyes, all lorgnettes were turned upon him; the loveliest eyes gazed at him; the most charming lips smiled upon him, and whispered his name with admiration. Even the envious men were forced to notice his interesting appearance, and to acknowledge his distinguished bearing.

Only the arrival of the king turned the general attention from the virtuoso into another channel. Prince von Schwarzfels hastened to the stairs to meet the exalted guest; the duchess received him at the door with a low bow and thanked him for the honor accorded her. On her arm the monarch passed through the brilliant assembly, followed by his suite, nodding pleasantly to the right and left.

Suddenly he turned his lorgnette, for he was short-sighted, upon the tall, conspicuous form of the artist, before whom he remained standing.

"See!" cried the king. "Orpheus, not in Tartarus, but in Elysium, whose music charms man and gods, tames beasts and moves stones."

"Your majesty is too kind. Our times know no miracles."

"The true artist proves the contrary and still works

wonders, as your example shows; he constrains the beast in the human breast, and the hardened heart melts to-day under the power of tones. You are indeed such a magician. I hope to-day you will give us a new proof of your art. Our amiable hostess has promised me a great treat, and you will surely keep your word to her and me."

"I will do what lies in my power in order to fulfill the wishes of your majesty."

"I am pleased to hear that, for my poor ears must hear so many false tones and discordant sounds, that a *bath of purity* will do them good. One need not be a King Saul in order to long for the tones of David's harp. You need not fear, either, that in an attack of ill-nature I shall cast a lance at you. Rather would I raise you to the knighthood of some new order of merit."

With those gracious words the king passed on without awaiting the thanks of the astonished artist, who was envied by all the bystanders.

In spite of that acknowledgment of his talent, and his flattering social reception, Norin missed the only magnet which had attracted him to the duchess' salon with irresistible power. In vain did his eyes seek the lovely Countess Harrer. A certain timidity restrained him from asking the prince for her, and besides, the prince was too much occupied by the king's presence and the arangements for the fête, so that he caught a glimpse of him rarely.

Disappointed, the envied artist withdrew to a corner of the salon in which he could pursue his dreams and thoughts undisturbed, while at a given sign the fête prepared for the entertainment of the royal guest began.

To the sound of music the curtain before a small improvised stage rose, and exhibited a number of tableaux from the masterpieces of celebrated artists. First was to be seen the "Lorelei" upon her high rock, a wonderfully beautiful woman with luxuriant fair hair, her seductive lyre in her hand. Then Tasso at the Court of Ferrara, a merry Flemish market-scene, crusaders and pilgrims in the desert, the sorrowing royal couple from Lessing's, then much-admired painting, and pretty Rebecca at the Well, by Horace Vernet.

Like a wilful child Norin closed his eyes to the combination of youth, grace and beauty, because his hope of seeing the lovely countess there, had not been fulfilled.

Involuntarily he thought of her. Her absence only served to increase his yearning, and rendered him insensible to the charms of all those handsome women.

Momentarily his impatience increased; he was bored amid that brilliant throng, and only the wish expressed by the king to hear his latest composition, detained him in the salon.

But his work, of which he could have been so proud, had lost all of its significance for him; for the only one was lacking who had inspired him to write it. It was as if he were to play to deaf ears.

Only the touching music by Prince Radziwill of Gœthe's "Faust," which announced a new picture, at length touched a sympathetic chord in Norin's heart. A soft murmur of admiration at the same time passed through the assembly and attracted his attention, so that he fixed his eyes upon the stage.

With body bent forward, he gazed at the bewitching tableau.

There, upon an old, carved chair, sat the most charm-

ing of Goethe's women before a spinning-wheel in a blue, old-German gown, her charming head, with its wealth of golden hair, leaning pensively upon her white hand, dreamily lost in love's pleasures and pains.

Was it fact or fiction, the countess herself, or "Gretchen's" touching form, her pale cheeks slightly flushed, and her wonderful eyes filled with the fire of an unfamiliar glow, animated by innocence and desire, while her sweet lips seemed to whisper softly: "My peace has flown, my heart is heavy."

It was the embodiment of poetry, which spoke so wonderfully to all hearts that even that sated, dissipated assemblage could not restrain a feeling of deep emotion.

"Wonderful!" whispered the delighted king, and his exclamation was echoed a hundred times.

Suddenly the form of the lovely Gretchen became animated, her limbs trembled slightly, her bosom heaved beneath its blue gown. Only with difficulty could she maintain her pose until the curtain fell.

He alone, with the penetration of love, observed the tremor, the pallor, and instinctively he divined the cause.

"She loves, but who is the happy man? If she *should* love me!"

So thought and hoped the celebrated artist, as he glanced at the charming woman.

## VII

### THE MAY-BELLS

The loud applause which greeted the falling of the curtain, aroused Norin from his reverie. The ladies and gentlemen who had taken part in the tableaux mingled with the guests, wearing their gay attire, which lent a fantastic character to the fête.

The charming Gretchen, or rather Countess Harrer, was at once surrounded by a swarm of admirers who expressed their admiration frankly.

"Upon my honor," said one gallant prince, "Hagen herself would have to give place to you, madame. Were you to play the role, there would not be an empty seat in the theater."

"Celestial, superb!" lisped another. "You are the personification of innocence, of naïveté."

Praises resounded from all sides; even the king uttered several complimentary phrases. But the countess sought to escape that admiration, and offered her husband her hand that he might lead her from the midst of the ever-increasing throng and the nauseating compliments.

Suddenly she started so violently that the colonel paused and looked at her in astonishment.

"You are so pale and nervous. What ails you?" he asked, anxiously.

"Nothing, nothing at all!" she replied in confusion. "I think that the heat of the room, the strain during

the representation, have affected me somewhat. But it will pass over."

"That is the fault of those miserable tableaux," scolded the colonel. "I dislike such exhibitions; they are highly distasteful to me."

"You know how I strove against it, but the duchess implored me so because Fraulein von Zechlin was taken suddenly ill and had to be excused. Only to oblige her did I fill the place."

"Of course it could not be helped this time, but in future, I do not wish—"

Again she started as if threatened by some great danger. She had not been mistaken, there was the artist by the side of Prince von Schwarzfels. The next moment the promised introduction was given.

A few empty phrases, low bows on both sides, apparently without any signification; but beneath that calm surface trembled the deepest emotion. While their faces simulated the most perfect composure their hearts beat tumultuously.

The empty words exchanged between Ada and Norin had, under the circumstances, a deeper meaning. The stereotyped phrases found expression in fiery glances.

Carelessly the prince fanned the flame, while the colonel stood by unsuspectingly and laughed good-naturedly at the prince's witty remarks, while he admired his handsome wife's reserved manner, observed the virtuoso's delicate tact and pleasant ways, and began to repent of his former prejudice.

Whoever could have seen that harmless group at that moment, would surely not have foreseen that in secret a social tragedy was being prepared—that merciless fate with invisible hands was already pointing out its sacrifices.

The formal introduction, and the short conversation which followed, was interrupted by the duchess, who, in a flattering manner, besought the artist to play his latest composition.

"I am sorry," said she, "that I must take you from our dear countess, but his majesty is waiting, and easily grows impatient; he wishes to hear your magical song."

"What song?" asked Ada.

"May-bells!" cried the prince with emphasis, as he smiled mysteriously and glanced at the duchess. "Is not," said the latter, evidently without any object, "is not the title original, charming!"

"Charming!" stammered Ada with a blush.

Fortunately the colonel noticed neither her confusion nor the virtuoso's embarrassment. Norin with a low reverence left the group in order to begin the anxiously awaited concert.

The strings of the instrument were stirred by a spring breeze. Springs rippled, and the evening air whispered among the tender, young foliage. Elves danced in the moonlight, flower-spirits rose from the open chalices and sang sweetly and seductively of spring joys and of the happiness of love.

Clear bells, so charming and so musical, invited to the merry fête, and no one could refuse to come. The May-bells rang, woods and plains awoke, and in all the bushes and branches a new life stirred. Everywhere sprouted, pressed, budded, blossoms opened; nightingales warbled and rejoiced; shepherds and shepherdesses caressed one another, and in the distance the huntsman blew his horn.

From among the harmonious chorus could be distinguished two voices, a happy pair of lovers, youth

and maiden, he imploring, flattering, cajoling, she trembling, timid and refusing him his request, until he forced from her heart the sweet secret and she sank into his arms.

The May-bells rang sweetly and called the flower-spirits and elves to the wedding celebration. They sang of the great happiness on earth, of the bliss of the first kiss, of the heart's felicity. Louder rippled the springs, more passionately twittered the nightingales, still clearer rang the bridal song of nature with its celestial tones, which gradually died away.

The artist had surpassed himself; never had he played with such deep feeling, such tender expression. Love seemed to have permeated his last composition; the most ardent passion filled his soul, animated his hands.

He thought only of Ada, he played for her alone at that moment; to her alone he spoke in sweet tones, in enchanting harmonies; he rang the tell-tale May-bells which he had chosen as a secret messenger of his passion, to whom he had entrusted the secret of his love.

She heard and understood only too well the seductive language to which she alone possessed the key. Had it been in words, she would probably have turned away in anger, have scorned the tempter, and have turned a deaf ear; but the power of music, of tones, lent the seduction a charm which concealed the sinful inclination and ensnared the heart with subtle flattery. Yet she felt the secret sin; her womanly dignity struggled, her sense of duty rebelled; she silently strove against the insinuating voices within her own breast.

She wished to rise and leave the room as soon as Norin had finished his number, but she feared to attract attention by such an action and also to arouse

suspicion. Against her will she was forced to remain by her husband's side and to affect the most perfect composure, while in reality her bosom was torn by conflicting sensations.

To her delight the guests were themselves too much impressed to heed her perplexity.

All pressed around the genial artist to pay court to him, to thank him. A number of the handsomest women, at their head the Duchess of Taland, strove for one glance, one word from the hero of the hour.

"May-bells! Celestial, delightful!" issued from hundreds of lips.

"Our modern priestesses of Bacchus," said a sarcastic diplomatist, "will tear this new Orpheus to pieces in their passion, and share his bloody limbs."

"Madness is contagious," replied a celebrated traveler, "I believe that in each of those lovely women there is a Nero, who wished to kill his mistress in order to discover the charm which had fascinated him. But our ladies are deceived; they will find nothing, the virtuoso has no heart."

The countess, too, was secretly disgusted with the comedy being enacted; she felt wounded, repelled, and therefore avoided the vicinity of the artist who sought her everywhere in vain. Her cheeks glowed, her head burned, her heart throbbed, her nerves quivered and wherever she turned she could hear the bewitching melody of the seductive May-bells.

Everyone was enthusiastic over it. Ada alone dared not speak, dared not look up, for fear she might betray her secret. She fancied all lips were whispering of it, all eyes following her, all fingers pointing to her.

She could remain in the hall no longer; she could not bear the sly smiles of the men, the compromising

whispers of the ladies, both of which existed only in her imagination.

"Let us go!" said she to the colonel, who was beside her. "I feel ill and fear an attack of my headache."

"Impossible!" replied he, firmly. "The prince has engaged me to take a hand at cards with his majesty, and of course I accepted the honor. You must see that I cannot draw back, even for your sake."

"Unfortunately!" sighed she. "I will not disturb you, but will drive home alone."

"Of what are you thinking? I cannot allow that. I should not be comfortable, did I not know you to be near me. And then the questions which would arise! They might fancy the most terrible things, and the duchess might feel offended."

"And yet I do not wish to remain any longer! Believe me, it would be better were I to leave now. Do not detain me, I implore you!"

It seemed as if Ada feared the theatening danger, as if she wished to fly the temptation; but the unsuspicious colonel did not see with open eyes, did not hear with open ears, his wife's cry of anguish; he did not understand her urgent prayer, her feverish excitement.

Proud of the honor accorded him, he hastened to the king's card-table, and in his thoughtlessness left the weak woman alone with her weakness, her anguish of soul.

Possessed with a secret unrest, Ada fled from the room, the atmosphere of which threatened to suffocate her, through the magnificent rooms to the familiar pavilion which bordered on the duchess' orangery. Here she thought herself free from the glances of the guests, from the irresistible charm of the virtuoso.

In the adjoining pavilion reigned a pleasant still-

ness, a refreshing coolness, which contrasted agreeably with the loud bustle and oppressive sultriness of the drawing-room.

The fountain splashed lightly. A soft divan in a cozy corner, shaded by a canopy of plants, invited the exhausted woman to a seat, and she soon gave herself up to dangerous dreams.

The tones of the song of spring and love rang in her ears.

She still felt as if in a dream, when the heavy velvet portieres opened softly, and in the aperture appeared Norin, more fascinating than ever. At the unexpected sight of him she awoke, and a slight tremor of her body, the heaving of her bosom, the flush upon her cheeks, betrayed her confusion, and his approaching good-fortune.

She sprang up from the divan as if to fly, but her weak limbs would not bear her away, and, as if rooted to the spot by his magnetic glances, she could not move a foot.

She thought of the charm ascribed to him, for an indescribable fear possessed the poor woman; her heart fluttered like a lamed bird in the vicinity of the snake which it tried in vain to escape.

She stood there as pale and mute as the statues around her, with a beseeching expression and uplifted arms.

He did not speak either, but his lips pressed an ardent, burning kiss upon her cold hand, which she could not draw from him.

It was so quiet in the pavilion that the beating of their hearts could be heard, but it required no words, no explanations to prove that he loved her.

# BOOK II

# I

## THE TEMPTATION

Since her meeting with the celebrated artist, Ada had fallen a prey to the demoniacal passion for the genial virtuoso to which so many women before her had become victims. But she struggled against it with all her womanly dignity and strength, for the danger was no secret to her.

She had resolved not to again meet the artist, and to avoid every opportunity of doing so. Like a timid child she clung so much the more closely to the honorable man who, unfortunately, had no suspicion of the feelings of her heart.

Just at the moment when she required his presence the most, he found it necessary to set out upon a tour of military inspection.

That news, usually so indifferent to her, caused her so much uneasiness that she besought him to allow her to accompany him, and to leave the Residence with him.

"That cannot well be done," said the colonel, "although I should like to gratify your every wish. It would arouse comment and make me appear absurd. Moreover, the great distance and haste of the journey would, in your condition, render it impossible for you to accompany me. You know the doctor has recommended rest and care of your nerves."

"I do not think he understands my case. From

experience I know that pleasure and excitement agree with me the best."

"But I told you it was not a pleasure-trip, therefore, forget about it, for under no condition will I consent."

"Oh! Then I am lost," murmured Ada tearfully.

"That is too bad," replied the colonel irritably. "Your caprices exceed all bounds, and I really believe, up to this time, I have been too indulgent."

Ada did not reply; she was wounded, for she was conscious of her aim. After her husband's departure, the countess tried to protect herself from temptation by self-imposed retirement; but the sense of loneliness only served to nourish her passion.

Wherever she went, whatever she did, she saw Norin's image. She could take up no newspaper without reading his praises.

The visitors, whom she could not refuse to see, spoke only of him; even the duchess raved about him and his successes.

Norin himself had hoped to meet the countess again in society. Torn by longing, by doubt, vacillating between fear and hope, he fancied he had vexed her by his passion in the duchess' salon. But her resistance, the conviction that he had to deal with no ordinary woman, piqued his self-love and urged him to a decisive step.

His triumphs hitherto achieved were matters of indifference to him; as usual, they did not satisfy him. From youth, his artistic soul had followed a poetical idea, which he, when it was found, tore foolishly to pieces as a thoughtless boy would a butterfly.

So his thoughts followed Ada, and the happiness he might enjoy with her. In her he saw the embodiment of his ideal.

The thought that the countess was already another's, could not frighten a man like Norin, for he was in the habit of disregarding the bounds of morality, and knew no other law than the satisfying of his subjective wishes.

For him the power of passion was an excuse for everything.

Scorning the obstacles in his way, Norin obeyed the momentary impulse of his heart, and called at the Countess Harrer's.

In surprise she held his card in her hand, doubtful as to whether she should receive him, while the old servant respectfully awaited her reply. Only the door separated her from the beloved man; one word from her and the bonds would fall. Woman, too, has her Rubicon, beside which she stands thoughtfully before she determines to take the decisive step. One moment decides her fate, one word her entire life. Fearfully she hesitated on that fatal border, to cross which would divide her forever from her family, the world, and home; would snap asunder all the cherished ties.

Such thoughts filled Ada's mind as she held Norin's card in her trembling hands, and gazed mechanically at the only too familiar name.

"Shall I admit the gentleman?" asked the servant. "He is waiting in the ante-room."

Ada started, for she thought herself alone. Old Frederick's voice sounded reproachful, like a premonition of her own conscience.

"No, no!" cried she in wild haste. "I cannot receive him, I feel too ill."

The servant withdrew; when he had gone, she would gladly have called him back; only a feeling of shame, the fear of compromising herself, restrained her. Invol-

untarily she hastened to the door in order to listen.

She only heard Norin express his regret in a tone in which she divined surprise and vexation. She must see him, if she could not speak to him.

Concealed behind the curtains she watched him as he left the house. His face betrayed disappointed hope, wounded love. She had insulted him; he must consider her weak and capricious and must doubt her love for him.

Once more he turned, he looked up at her; notwithstanding her hiding-place he had seen her, as his respectful bow, his melancholy smile, betokened.

Blushing and confused she retreated from the window, and sank exhausted by her struggle upon the sofa, while hot tears filled her eyes; regret and shame, fear and discontent, agitated her bosom.

She hated herself for her cowardice, for her weakness, her indecision, for she had neither the courage to follow temptation, nor to resist it.

In her opinion he must despise her for her childish, hesitating manner, for her evident cowardice.

As she was considering what course to pursue in that false position, the old servant returned. In his hand he held a roll of paper which was tied with a white silk ribbon.

"What is it?" asked Ada, displeased at the interruption.

"The gentleman whom madame refused to see, gave me this paper."

"Very well," said she with difficulty; "lay it on my desk. You may go."

Only when he had left her, did she dare to touch the fatal roll. With trembling fingers she hastily untied the bows of ribbon, opened the elegant cover,

and Norin's new composition "May-bells" met her gaze, with a respectful dedication to Ada.

While she had repelled and insulted him, he had left her a fresh token of his love, his inclination. No woman in her circle would have despised such a preference.

Though she had been strong, or rather weak enough not to receive his visit, she could not possibly refuse that attention without wounding him mortally.

Politeness required that she should thank him for so valuable a gift. With that object in view Ada seated herself at her desk; from her portfolio she took a sheet of paper, while in her hand she held the ivory and gold pen.

But never had a letter been harder to write; for a long time she sat there meditating, her head upon her hands, her eyes fixed upon the wall.

Hastily she wrote several lines upon the paper, but when she read them over they seemed to her so cold and meaningless that she tore the letter up, and threw it into the waste-basket beside her. The second sheet had no better fate.

She finally finished a letter in which she regretted her indisposition, and, of course, invited him to call again. She involuntarily went farther than she had originally intended.

It did not require any special encouragement to bring him back to her feet, for he loved her more than he had ever loved a woman. Compared with her, all his former connections seemed as naught.

He reveled in the thought of realizing that ideal of his life, of finding a soul which understood him, which should belong to him forever, regardless of all worldly ties.

Only such a love offered the spoiled virtuoso any charm, in that it raised him above the daily commonalities of life.

The mood in which Norin approached the countess found an echo in her own heart and helped to calm her rising anxiety, to soothe the qualms of conscience.

She had no reason to doubt his sincerity, and therefore she submitted so much easier to the temptation which appeared to her with the crown of art, and in the garb of poetry.

With delight she listened now to the words, now to the tones of Norin, in which he unfolded before her his better nature, and raised her above herself.

At such times the selfish virtuoso disappeared before the true artist.

True love is indeed the spring-time of life; it awakes all slumbering germs, all the buds of the mind, the hidden forces of the disposition. Our hearts beneath its touch resemble the singing Memnon in the desert, which, animated by the rays of the rising sun, breaks forth into holy songs and hymns.

The greatest happiness had fallen to the share of Norin and Ada. When at twilight the former sat at the latter's feet, looked into her dove-like eyes, he felt as free from every earthly wish as from every impure desire.

Like the fainting wanderer in the desert she swallowed the intoxicating potion which the hand of love held out to her, without suspecting the dangerous poison at the bottom of the chalice.

So the days and weeks passed with wonderful rapidity for the lovers, and in the enjoyment of the present, they forgot the future and the world, by which they were not forgotten.

## II

### LOVE'S STRUGGLES

The frequent visits of the virtuoso to the countess' house could not, in spite of the size of the town, remain long unnoticed, especially as Norin was the hero of the day, and the countess, owing to her beauty and social position, was a target for malicious scandal.

Conscious of her innocence, assured by the hitherto pure nature of her connection, Ada scorned all precautions and anything that pertained to secrecy. She thought only of the idealism of her love, in the mutual intercourse of mind with mind. She asked nothing else than to see Norin, to listen to his words, his melodies.

The infidelity to her absent husband did not appear to her in a culpable light, for she had nothing in common with him, and notwithstanding their many years of wedded life, she was as much of a stranger to him as on the first day of their acquaintance. According to her opinion, she broke none of her vows if she honored genius, and built a temple to genius in the vacant spot in her heart which the count had never claimed.

For years she had pined and yearned; and now when the refreshing spring bubbled forth, should she pass it by and remain as miserable as ever?

In that way Ada excused herself, her relations to-

ward Norin, and tried from time to time to soothe her awakening consciousness.

The world, however, judged differently of Countess Harrer's alliance with the famous virtuoso. At first the piquant news was simply whispered from one to another; the *elect* smiled and looked at each other knowingly when either Norin's or Ada's name was accidentally mentioned. No one doubted the countess' guilt and it was especially noticeable that her own sex condemned her the most, and the most cruelly.

Even in the Duchess von Taland's salon the matter was talked over.

"I fear," said the duchess, "that our little countess will compromise herself by her passion for our friend, and will make herself unhappy. Such women do not possess the necessary shrewdness and energy which passion demands. They only do things by halves, which always leads to destruction. In love, as in gaiming, one must stake everything and cry '*Va banque.*' He who wavers or hesitates, he who cares anxiously for his fame or the opinion of the world, he who has religious or moral qualms, is surely lost."

"I am sorry for the poor woman," replied the prince, only to make some reply, for his thoughts were far away.

"She cannot be saved. I know that. Such women are always unhappy because nature made them too tender. Wax melts in the fire. However, I did not credit her with being so bold. What presumption for her to love a man like that Norin! The child does not suspect the danger, and toys with the gay reptile. The heart of an artist is as large and as deep as the sea, but unfathomable, full of shallows and rocks. Only the bold diver fetches the pearl from its depths;

the timorous swimmer sinks and is swallowed by the treacherous waves."

"It almost seems," replied the prince, with a mocking smile, "as if you envied the countess the danger."

"I did not think you jealous, but I am glad that you can be. You have nothing to fear, that you know, my friend. If I should ever cease to love you, I will tell you frankly, for I should expect the same candor from you. Love can only thrive in freedom; all force is death to it. I admire Norin; I honor his talent as I should in anyone. Therefore I am interested in his fate, and should like to rescue him and the countess with him. As his friend, you should warn him."

"Will a lover listen to the voice of reason? When passion speaks all consideration disappears," replied the prince, sighing involuntarily.

"Yet we must do our duty. The danger is greater and nearer than you think. When the count returns there will undoubtedly be explanations and a scandal. I know the colonel, who, in such matters, will brook no nonsense, and who is an excellent shot. It would grieve me if such a talented person should end in that manner. But even should Norin live, he is still more to be pitied. Bound to a woman who clings to him like a millstone and hinders his every step, he will sooner or later be ruined if he does not forcibly burst the bonds, which he cannot do without a painful struggle, without the greatest sacrifice, and which he will do, perhaps, when it is too late."

Indeed, the prince determined to speak seriously with Norin as to the danger, and at least to warn him; but, as ill-luck would have it, he did not find the virtuoso at home, and Norin, likewise, never found the prince, for the latter was more busy than usual with

politics and care for the result of his last adventure.

So various circumstances combined to aid the two lovers in their dangerous assurance, from which they were first startled by the unexpected return of the count, although he, of course, had no suspicion of the change which had taken place during his absence.

His appearance alone, however, sufficed to convince Ada of the nature of her feelings, and of the greatness of the danger. Like a sonnambulist on hearing her name, she awoke from her dream as she heard his voice, saw his face again.

Only with the greatest effort could she stand erect when he greeted her with his usual affection. Silently, and in embarrassment she returned his kiss, answered his loving questions as to her health.

She was still too unskilled in the art of deception to hide her deep emotion from him; but the colonel paid no heed to it, and ascribed her embarrassment to her vexation at their parting.

He redoubled his attention, overwhelmed her with new proofs of his love, which, in her position, must have oppressed her.

"I owe you an apology," said he.

"I do not remember for what," replied the countess, raising her eyes.

"I have a better memory. It was unkind of me to refuse your request to take you with me on my journey, and to leave you here alone. You are not angry with me still, are you?"

"No, no!" she murmured, with increasing embarrassment. "It was your will."

"And it was for your good, out of respect for your delicate health; but I should, perhaps, have been kinder toward you. I was indeed too harsh, and on the way reproached myself bitterly."

"Ah! You are too good, too thoughtful!"

"You must forgive the old soldier, for he loves you with all his heart and only desires your happiness. But I have sought to repair the wrong. I thought of it when I ordered this trifle for you."

"You make me ashamed."

"My present will only have worth if you wear it, and it must remind you of the husband who knows no other happiness than your love."

With those words the count handed his wife a magnificent case of blue velvet, with her initials and arms upon it; upon the rich velvet gleamed a golden, finely-wrought bracelet, set with brilliants, in the center of which was his picture.

At the sight of his likeness Ada uttered a slight exclamation; her cheeks turned pale, and her hands in which she held the bracelet trembled so violently that she almost let it fall.

"Well! Well!" smiled the count, good-naturedly. "You are as startled as if you had seen a ghost."

"It was only the surprise," stammered the guilty wife. "I am so nervous, so suffering."

"Poor child!" replied he, with paternal sympathy. "And I have not even thanked you for the costly gift."

She offered him her cold hand, which he covered with his kisses. His caresses, all those proofs of his warm attachment, pained her more than the bitterest reproaches would have done. She suffered untold agony until he finally left her, in order to rest after his long journey.

Sobbing, she sank upon the sofa and buried her face in both hands so as not to see the costly bracelet which glittered in its open case. She could not bear

to see it; she sprang up and closed the case, which she concealed in the drawer of her toilette-table.

But she could not forget his picture; it haunted her with its faithful, loving features, which breathed of ingratitude, infidelity to the best of husbands.

For the first time she saw the abyss at her feet, the threatening temptation, and suspected the depth and at the same time the guilt of her inclination. The veil was thrust aside and the terrible Medusa-head of secret guilt stared her in the face.

Remorse rose in her bosom and warned her of her duty. She would go to her injured husband, fall at his feet and confess all. She was not yet culpable; only in her thoughts had she sinned, therefore she could hope for pardon.

Still, fear of her husband, whose code of honor was so rigid, detained her. She felt too weak to bear his anger, his just reproaches. She knew him too well, and knew that he would not understand her, that he would consider her more guilty than she really was.

She feared more for his anger against Norin than against herself. The slightest suspicion might cause the death of her beloved, for the colonel guarded his honor jealously.

One means alone remained to her. It was to sever all connection with Norin; but she overrated her own strength, while she mistook the force of her passion. She who once has tasted of the forbidden fruit, cannot turn back, even if she would.

She had not the courage to give up what to her meant death! What value would life have for her were she to see her beloved no more, to hear his voice no more, to listen no more to his grand conceptions?

Thus strove the unhappy woman with her heart and

her duty, without finding any outlet, without forming any decision. Her head burned feverishly and an unspeakable anguish contracted her breast. It seemed to her as if the ceiling were bearing down upon her in order to suffocate her. She must obtain fresh air; she must open the window in order not to perish.

The fresh air did her good and calmed her excited blood; she leaned her heated cheeks against the cool window-panes, and looked out into the dark night.

It was as quiet as if all the world were dead; only in the tree-tops the night-wind sighed like a poor soul which could not even rest in the grave.

The moon hid her pale face behind heavy clouds. Suddenly Ada started as if electrified.

She heard her name distinctly.

"Ada!" whispered a voice in the stilly night.

She dared not reply; her breath came in gasps, her heart pulsated so violently that she could count its beats.

"Ada!" was repeated louder and more distinctly.

She had not been mistaken. Hidden behind the trees stood a dark, tall form wrapped in a cloak.

It was Norin. She had recognized him; but the sight of him filled her with such anguish that she only possessed sufficient strength to make an imploring, evasive gesture.

Once more he extended his arms, then he vanished like a shadow in the darkness.

"Ah, how he loves me!" she murmured, as she hastily closed the window, and, almost fainting, tottered to her bed.

## III

### ON THE BRINK OF THE ABYSS

Since the count's return from his journey, there had been no outward change in his relations toward his wife; there was no sign, no symptom of the approaching catastrophe, and even the closest observer could discover nothing striking or surprising about them.

Ada's low-spirited mood was nothing very extraordinary, for she frequently had such nervous attacks.

A dreamy languor had spread over her pale, lovely face, and in her gentle eyes glowed the secret fire of passion. Never had she appeared more beautiful to the count; never did he feel happier in the possession of such a wife. He looked up to her as a being of superiority, and even her caprices, her weaknesses, only increased his love; for nothing touches and charms a strong man like the helplessness of a woman.

The more the bond between them loosened, the farther removed he became from her, so much the more careless did she grow of his habits, so much the more patiently did she listen to his conversation, the prosiness of which almost distracted her.

She even permitted him to smoke his cigar in her room without complaining of the headache.

Her forbearance arose partly from indifference, but more from the consciousness of the wrong committed against her honorable husband. It seemed to her as if she must apologize to him for the injury done him;

as if she must recompense him by a double measure of kindness and consideration. Like most women, too, she felt like clinging more closely to him, the more she thought of leaving him forever.

Her husband's presence, the fear of his anger, the power of passion, the requirements of her soul, Norin's prayers, fear for her lover, all formed an unbreakable chain which bound her fast.

With wonderful rapidity she passed through all the phases of guilty love, from the first unnoticeable self-deception to the complete self-conscious lie. On the day following her husband's return she received from the hands of a maid, who had been bribed, a letter from Norin, in which he begged more passionately than ever for a clandestine meeting.

She hesitated to reply, to grant his request; but no other way remained to her, for she must advise him of the count's presence. In her reply she represented to him the necessity of denial; she besought him to spare her reputation, to turn aside the danger threatening him.

As we have seen before, her letter had the opposite effect upon him. The count's return only fanned the flame; the fear of losing her increased his passion, and the danger could not frighten him away. He urged her more warmly to trust him, to break all bonds and to be his forever.

Although his words were alluring and seductive, although her love was so powerful, she shrank from that last, extreme step.

She had no friend in whom she could confide, from whom she could obtain counsel and aid. So, left entirely to herself, she yielded to the force of fate. Once drawn into the whirlpool of passion, there was no es-

cape. After crossing the boundaries, she could not draw back.

From that time forth her life was like that of the damned—without rest, without peace, without outward or inward security, a prey to her own conscience, to the horrible fear of detection.

She was obliged to learn to control her features, her glances; to weigh every word, to force herself to be merry when she was sad, and to appear composed when she was agitated.

A footstep startled her, the slightest whisper rendered her ill at ease; everything aroused her suspicion, her anxiety, her fear. When the count sat by her side and spoke to her in his kindly tones, she feared she would betray herself; when he left her, she feared that the rumor of her guilt might reach his ears. Whenever the door-bell rang she was seized with a nervous tremor, as if she expected her accusers, her judges.

Not less uneasy was she rendered by the demeanor of those around her, especially of the servants, all of whom, with the exception of the maid, she suspected. Old, faithful Frederick was the object of constant dread, and a glance from him served to disconcert her.

Although he was always respectful to his mistress, she fancied she read silent reproach in his honest face; grave warning in his solemn manner. She avoided him as much as possible, and in secret she was vexed with him, though he gave her no cause.

She, too, was annoyed by the lies, the deception she was forced into.

She had to invent pretexts for Norin's visits which could not remain a secret from the count; she had to explain, to deceive, to lie, in order to allay his suspicions, to hide her guilt.

Fearfully she awaited from day to day the dreaded disclosure, but the eyes of the count, like those of so many men in a similar situation, were blinded. Notwithstanding his former prejudice against the virtuoso he received the announcement of his visits, which Ada made in as indifferent a tone as possible, without the least suspicion. He saw in them simply a caprice of his wife's, a pardonable desire to become better acquainted with the hero of the day, for she, he knew, loved music above all else.

The honorable man never dreamed that an illicit connection could exist between a Countess Harrer and a virtuoso; it would have been incredible, absurd.

He made light of Ada's artistic enthusiasm without noticing her confusion, her sudden blushes, and tremors, while she made an effort to appear gay and to force a smile in order to deceive him.

"I am glad," said the count, "that during my absence you found diversion. Although I understand nothing about music, I hear that Norin is a kind of musical field-marshal on his instrument, and I have a great deal of respect for talent recognized by his majesty. Moreover, he is said to be a very amusing fellow, and to have better manners than artists generally have, so that one can receive him with pleasure."

"The first families prize his visits as an honor," said Ada, with apparent composure.

"That is, in my opinion, an excess which I cannot comprehend. Those people must not be spoiled and they should be given to understand that they are looked upon as a diversion, but that otherwise we will have no nearer connection with them. Still, I need not tell you how to conduct yourself with regard to that Norin in order to preserve your dignity and to keep him in his proper place."

Ada could no longer resist her husband's wish to re-enter society; but it increased her anxiety, threatened her security.

Ada's reappearance was greeted with a certain attention which, under other circumstances, would perhaps have flattered her vanity. She felt that in the drawing-room all eyes were fastened upon her, that all gazed at and talked about her. When she approached, the whispering ceased; but the significant smiles of her friends betrayed to her that she was the object of malicious gossip.

"My dearest countess," cried the enthusiastic Leonore, "we have not seen you for so long. I would gladly have called upon you, but they told me that you were ill and received no one. But to my delight I learned that your sufferings permitted you at least to make an exception in favor of your most intimate friends, among which I may not reckon myself."

"I was, indeed, very nervous," murmured Ada, with evident embarrassment.

"I am very sorry, but you must be more careful and not study music so assiduously. I know of nothing that affects the nerves more than piano-playing, even when one is fortunate enough to listen to such a master as the famous Norin, as often as you can."

Her words sounded so sympathetic, and yet every word was like the stroke of a dagger; every apparently harmless phrase was calculated to pain and wound.

The poor countess was without any weapons against those attacks, for she did not possess either the Duchess von Taland's courage, bold enough to defy public opinion, nor the skill, or rather the malicious *repartée* which returns like with like.

Ada felt the ground slipping from beneath her feet;

but she could not avoid society without arousing comment, so she had to drain the bitter draught to the last drop, to hide her trouble beneath an artificial smile, and, like the dying gladiator, sink dying to the ground with a good grace.

Count Harrer, too, was in a like manner judged. Society shrugged its shoulders at his blindness, laughed in secret at his incomprehensible weakness, and mocked at his misfortune.

Notwithstanding his innocence, the colonel could not help noticing the attitude of the circle in which he moved, though he was far from suspecting the true cause. The secret poison began to work slowly and made him uneasy. Thoughts which formerly he had never known disturbed his mind; strange fears flitted like shadows through his brain. Occasionally his eyes rested searchingly upon Ada, as if trying to probe the depths of her heart, and sometimes, when with her, a sudden, swift suspicion flashed across his mind, which he at once rejected as unworthy.

There were times when the once so happy, contented man brooded and meditated sorrowfully. Even his usual occupation and duties did not satisfy him.

Without acknowledging it, the count felt that his peace had been disturbed, his confidence shaken, although as yet he could see no grounds for jealousy.

## IV

### THE CRISIS

In order to escape those burdensome thoughts, the count visited more frequently the so-called "Jockey Club," where met the flower of the nobility and the gilded youth of the Residence.

At their head stood the Prince von Schwarzfels while Baron von Gallen was vice-president.

On that especial day the baron held it as his duty to protect the honor of the "Jockey Club" against an unheard of demand; nothing less than the introduction of Norin into that exclusive circle.

The artist, who at that time was in the zenith of his fame, had been proposed by his friend, the Prince von Schwarzfels. So much the more did Baron Gallen feel called upon to resist, for between him and the prince there existed an easily explained antipathy and jealousy.

The romantic Leonore, too, who could not pardon the artist's infidelity, had used her influence to prepare a defeat for him through her new admirer, and by that means to revenge herself on him and the still more heartily despised countess.

The majority of the members of the club shared the vice-president's views and expressed themselves more or less energetically against the admission of the virtuoso.

"We must show the fellow," said the baron, "that

there is a difference between a gentleman and a mere piano-pounder."

"I cannot divine what the ladies see in him," said a dragoon with the form of a Hercules.

"And I can see still less," replied the vice-president, "how there can be men who will suffer such actions. If such a thing were to happen to me, I would shoot the fellow like a mad dog."

"Too much honor for a strolling musician," replied the dragoon. "The whip for the impertinent fellow!"

The conversation reached the ears of several older gentlemen who were seated at the card-table.

Count Harrer, who was among the players, seemed to be rendered so uneasy by the conversation, that he, to his partner's vexation, made mistake after mistake.

"My God!" cried General von Strunoki, who was sitting opposite him, "you are paying no attention."

"Pardon me," replied the count, "but I do not feel well. If you will permit, we will cease playing. I am ready to give you your revenge to-morrow."

"For my part!" grumbled the irritable general. "To-day you can surely do nothing; until to-morrow then!"

The players rose, and the colonel approached the group of young men who were protesting in such violent and insulting words against the admission of the virtuoso.

"About what," he asked, with apparent unconcern, "are the gentlemen so greatly excited?"

The men glanced at one another in confusion, without replying at once.

There was an almost oppressive silence, for none of those men had the courage to acknowledge the truth to the deceived husband.

"If I am not mistaken," said he, after a pause, "you were talking of the famous virtuoso, Norin."

"We were," murmured Baron von Gallen.

"And what have you against him?"

"He wishes to join the club," replied the baron evasively.

"Prince von Schwarzfels proposed him."

"If that is all," replied the colonel, "I see no reason why you should be so excited."

Again the gentlemen looked at one another in surprise, while the colonel seemed to await their reply.

There was something so painful in the whole scene that even the frivolous members of the Jockey Club were struck by it. The stout captain pulled his black mustache in embarrassment, the young officers toyed with their sword-knots, while even the colonel frowned and looked in surprise at the circle.

"It seems," said he in an angry tone, "that there is some secret here. But I have a double right to your confidence, for I am one of the oldest members of the club and, moreover, that Norin visits me occasionally. If he has committed any wrong, I must know it. My honor requires a positive reply from you."

"We know nothing positive," replied Baron Gallen, "but, were I in your place, colonel, I should not receive such a person."

"Why not, if I may ask?"

"Because, because," stammered the baron, "his reputation in many ways is not of the best. A married man should be especially careful as to his relations with that fellow."

"Baron!" exclaimed the colonel, turning pale. "Your words contain an inference which I must beg you to explain. But this is no place for such an explanation."

"I am certainly at your service," replied the baron

with a bow. "You need only name the time and place."

Thereupon the colonel left the Jockey Club besieged by the most conflicting emotions. He was filled with suspicion, but his love was so great that he would not condemn his wife unheard; she should, she must defend herself before him, and in his heart he hoped he would find her less guilty than he feared she was.

Torn by doubt, by the fury of revenge, the colonel rushed to his house, where he was met by old Frederick with a serious face.

"Where is my wife?" he asked the faithful servant hastily.

"I do not know, the countess went out an hour ago."

"Call her maid," commanded the colonel, seized with a sudden suspicion.

"She has disappeared and is nowhere to be found," replied the servant in a sorrowful, disconsolate voice.

"What does that all mean?" asked the colonel, with difficulty maintaining his composure. "I want to know what has happened. Why are you silent, why do you stare at me so strangely?"

"Oh, sir!" stammered old Frederick. "Do not ask me, I cannot make up my mind to tell you what I, alas, have suspected for some time."

"Do you wish to drive me mad? I command you to hide nothing from me."

"I would rather have died, sir, than have stood before you thus. I almost fear that the countess has flown with her maid, and will never return."

As if felled by a blow, the colonel staggered, and sank into the nearest chair, covering his face with both hands.

A terrible silence, which the servant dared not break, followed. After a long, painful pause, the unhappy

man started up as if from a heavy, horrible dream!

"Man! What are you thinking of? You lie!"

"I have never lied to you, sir! But I wish I had to-day."

"What did you say? My wife, the countess—"

He could not speak the words. His tongue seemed paralyzed, his throat contracted, his features were convulsed, and his pale face seemed aged.

Gradually he succeeded in controlling himself to a certain degree.

"Tell me what happened during my absence. The whole truth," said the colonel, in a hollow voice.

"Some time ago," replied the old servant, trembling with emotion, "I began to suspect the maid, and also that all was not going just right in the house. The girl was saucy and took all sorts of liberties which I would not and could not stand. When I took her to task, she only grew more impertinent, and when I complained to the countess she took her maid's part, and said I was in the wrong. That provoked me, and I secretly determined to watch her."

"And why did you tell me nothing of all this?"

"Out of respect for my mistress, and because I did not wish to annoy you, sir, with my unfounded suspicions. Now, indeed, I see my mistake; I should certainly have been wiser to have told you at once."

"Be quick!" interrupted the colonel impatiently. "We have no time to lose."

"I watched, sir, and soon I thought I saw that the maid was carrying secret letters from the countess to the strange musician, and *vice versa;* but, although I tried to detect her in the act, the sly person evaded me, until one evening I followed her in order to meet her in the dark. Hidden behind a gate-way, by the

light of the lanterns, I saw her talk for some time to a gentleman, and saw him give her a letter and money. Then I knew what I wanted to; hastily I preceded her home and waited at the door until she started for the countess' room, in order to carry out her errand. I seized the letter in her hand without heeding her cries."

"Have you the letter? Give it to me!"

"Here it is, sir!"

Hastily the colonel broke the seal and read—read the confirmation of his suspicions, the proof of her guilt, and the cold perspiration bathed his brow.

"Very well," said he to the servant with well-simulated composure. "Tell the coachman to harness the horses and drive around at once."

"Yes, sir!"

"And do not forget to load my pistols. I shall require them."

With a deep sigh the old servant disappeared to execute the count's orders.

## V

### THE FLIGHT

A few moments later the count's carriage drew up at the virtuoso's dwelling, to which Ada, with her maid, had fled.

The news that old Frederick knew of her secret correspondence had robbed Ada of all presence of mind, and filled her with dread. She had no longer any will, and allowed her maid to rule her. The latter succeeded in evading the faithful servant, and in escaping unnoticed with the countess, before the colonel had returned from the "Jockey Club."

With the cry: "Save me! I am ruined!" Ada rushed into the arms of the surprised musician. More quickly and more unexpectedly than both had thought for, the dread catastrophe had come to pass, so that no time was left for reflection.

While Norin still wavered, the avenger knocked at the door. With a terrified face Giuseppe rushed in; he had tried vainly to detain the count in the antechamber.

"Her husband!" cried the horrified Italian. "Fly, or you are the child of death!"

There was barely sufficient time for Ada, with her maid, to rush into the adjoining room, where, almost fainting, she sank upon the threshold wringing her hands. The next moment the colonel, with a pale, unforgiving face, stood before the amazed virtuoso.

"Before you enter," he cried, beside himself, "you must kill me." p. 91.

"Where is my wife?" he demanded wildly.

"The countess?" replied Norin, affecting surprise. "I really do not know—"

"Wretch! I know that she is concealed here. You cannot deny that you have deceived me. The proof of your guilt is in my hands."

"You can kill me, you have the right to do that," said the musician, not without dignity. "I alone am guilty, if not in the measure in which you think, sir! I confess that I have abused your confidence; led on by my passion I deceived and injured you. You find me ready to make reparation. My blood, my life belong to you; more you dare not, and cannot demand."

A scarcely audible sound, a deep sigh, a gentle moan, broke the stillness and betrayed the presence of the unhappy woman, who could hear every word from her hiding-place. Without giving the virtuoso any reply, the count approached the door, but, before he reached it, Norin threw himself in his way.

"Before you enter," he cried, beside himself, "you must kill me."

"I will do so," said the count with icy composure, as he cocked his pistol without the musician making an effort to leave his place, standing ready to receive his opponent's bullet, and to protect his beloved with his life.

Mute and pale the two men faced one another, measuring each other with annihilating glances.

The count aimed at his sacrifice, when the door suddenly opened, and Ada, with a loud cry, threw herself between the bitter opponents, as she tried to protect her lover's breast with her own body. At the sound of her voice, the colonel's weapon was involuntarily lowered.

"Mercy, mercy!" she implored, clinging to the feet of the injured husband.

He could not spurn her, for he loved her in spite of all her guilt, and deep compassion arose within his breast for the once so passionately loved woman, who lay at his feet so deeply humiliated.

Perhaps he felt at that moment that he was not entirely blameless; that his lack of penetration, the inequality in their ages, and the difference in their tastes, were less to be condemned than the weakness of the tempted woman.

"Rise, countess," said he, in a milder tone. "Do not fear that I shall stain my hands with your blood, although you have broken my heart. In vain have I asked myself what I have done to deserve such a fate. What excuse can you offer for your infidelity, your treason? Did I not try to fulfill your every wish, before it was expressed by you? Have I not borne you in my hands, confided in you entirely, loved and cherished you as the apple of my eye?"

"Ah!" murmured Ada, deeply moved. "You were always the best, the noblest of men."

"When I sued for your hand," he continued, sadly, "I knew that our ages were unsuited, that your feelings took a different bend, that you made a sacrifice; but I hoped, by the depth of my affection, to bridge over that gulf and recompense you by redoubled love. I wanted to make you happy, and all my thoughts were concentrated upon that hope. Tell me, have I spoken the truth?"

"You have done all that and far more," she replied, with eyes cast down.

"Yet," returned the colonel reproachfully, "you deceived me, deserted me, sullied my honor shame-

fully. If I had no claim upon your love, if I could not inspire you with love for me, I thought at least to win your respect, to obtain your gratitude. You knew that you bore my name, and you have made it the subject of scorn for the world, and me the laughing stock of the town. I blindly trusted you, and you abused my confidence, robbed me of everything that is dear to a man on earth, poisoned my life, and made my existence unbearable."

"Pardon, pardon!" stammered Ada, with tears of the bitterest regret.

"May God in heaven forgive you, I cannot. As long as the brand burns, so long will the remembrance of your guilt gnaw at my heart. I might kill you, your life is in my hand, no court would sentence the wronged husband were he to exercise just revenge and punish the guilty wife with her seducer. But I do not wish to become your murderer; I shall leave you to the vengeance of heaven and the torture of your own conscience."

"Enough, more than enough," thus the virtuoso interrupted the count's angry speech. "Do not forget that you are addressing a defenseless woman; I alone deserve your reproaches, and am ready to give you any satisfaction you may demand."

"I know," replied the count, starting up, "what I owe to my honor, and you dare to remind me at this moment! I, too, doubt your courage as little as you doubt mine."

"Very well, I am ready."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Ada, involuntarily throwing her arms about Norin in order to detain him.

"No, no!" said the count with a bitter smile. "I

shall not fight with him. Do not fear, countess, that I shall kill your lover."

"I think," said the virtuoso, "that you do not consider me capable of giving you satisfaction, because I am of humble descent, because I am only a musician."

"That is not why I refuse you the wished-for satisfaction," replied the count with icy composure. "I esteem every honorable man, although his birth and position does not equal mine; but important reasons urge me not to accept your challenge."

"May I know those reasons?"

"First of all, I will fight with no—*thief!*"

"Count!" exclaimed Norin. "You are taking advantage of my position to heap insult upon insult."

"And yet I do not retract a word. You entered my house worse than any thief and stole from me. Under the mask of friendship you crept into my home circle, sat at my table, drank of my wine, and in return robbed me of everything that was dear to me upon earth."

"I offer you my life in return."

'Can your blood restore to me my lost happiness, my peace? Can it renew the broken bond? Should I suffer any the less were I to kill you as you deserve? Do you think that a murder can clear my tarnished honor? You have no right to dispose of a life which no longer belongs to you. There stands the woman to whom you owe your every breath, every pulsation of your heart. You are no longer free to fight a duel with me, even if I were inclined to accept your offer."

"Pray have done, count!"

"Perhaps I should have done better to have killed you as I first intended, but a, to me, incomprehensible weakness, the image of the countess, prevented me

from taking my just revenge, which perhaps every other man in my position would have done. A duel, such as you propose, I do not look upon, under the given circumstances, as possible; although that is the usual consequence in such cases. I scorn the opinion of the world, which thinks everything settled by the exchange of bullets. Such satisfaction would not suffice for me; for you it would be an honor, a triumph, even if my bullet should not miss you. I give you your life, which I still have in my hand, under one condition."

"Name it, count!"

"It is that you and the countess should leave the Residence to-day and never return. I myself will take the necessary steps to obtain our divorce as quietly as possible, without arousing suspicion. You are free, madame, to follow your inclinations."

Deeply moved, Ada covered her face with both hands, murmuring unintelligible words which sounded like thanks for such unexpected magnanimity.

"Do not thank me," said the count. "Sooner or later the punishment will be awarded you, which no guilty person can escape. Perhaps the day is not far distant when you will think with bitter regret of the past, and will remember the man who once loved you more than you ever dreamed of. But you," he continued, turning toward Norin, "assume from this day a heavy responsibility. Do not forget that from the instant you entered into my rights you assumed my duties toward this woman. At the death-bed of my best friend, who was at the same time Ada's father, I swore solemnly to protect his daughter, to guard her in all situations, to watch over her, to compassionate her weakness; in a word, to take the place of her

father. To that circumstance alone do you owe it, that I now spare your life. But woe to you, if you, as I fear, should ever prove unworthy of that charge; if you ever should reward with ingratitude the sacrifice which at this moment I am making to the memory of my friend."

"You have no right to doubt my love."

"I do not doubt your love, but the stability of your character. I know that at present you believe you love the countess, that you are ready to defend her with your life; but will you in years feel as you do today? Are you sure of your love, and do you possess the moral strength to resist new temptations?"

"Oh! I swear to you, count—"

"Do not swear, for I do not consider you capable of maintaining your oath. But if what I anticipate should ever come to pass, revenge will not be lacking; then I shall be no longer bound; then, as at this moment, your life will belong to me. I shall follow you whithersoever you may go; I will accompany you like your shadow, and no power on earth will protect you from my arm. Then only will I complete the punishment which now I forego, out of pity for that woman whom I once loved, out of respect for her father; and I promise you that my bullet shall not miss you a second time. You, madame, I bid farewell, with the request that you will forget me, as I shall try to forget you."

With painful agitation, Ada tottered toward the count, who, however, did not seem to perceive the hand held toward him. Only then did she recognize the worth of the man whom formerly she had understood as little as he understood her. That terrible hour was necessary to show her the nobility of his character and his mind.

Sorrow and shame had raised him above himself, so that he, indeed, filled her with admiration. Like a noble statue from which the veil had suddenly fallen, he stood erect before the unhappy woman and her guilty lover.

With a bow, without deigning to glance at her again, he passed her by.

Several hours later a carriage drove through the Residence gates; in it sat Norin and the weeping Ada.

The injured husband's vengeance followed them invisibly in the darkness of the night.

## VI

### THE NEW MASTERPIECE

Soon Norin and Ada reached their destination, and found a quiet nook on the romantic shores of Lake Geneva.

Among clinging vines, broad-leaved fig-trees, and sweet-scented walnuts, nestled the tiny villa which was to conceal the loving pair for a long time from the eyes of the world.

After the stormy scenes through which they had passed, both felt the need of rest and solitude.

Notwithstanding the diversion which their journey afforded, Ada could not drown the consciousness of her guilt, could not still her gnawing remorse, which by her injured husband's magnanimous conduct had been greatly increased.

Even Norin's tender affection, his repeated assurances, were not sufficient to assuage her grief, to dry her tears and to comfort her agitated heart. The remembrance of that terrible scene, the reproaches of her conscience, her dread of an uncertain future, hovered over her, and followed her like the dark shadows of avenging spirits.

Norin, too, was in no way satisfied with the consequences of his last adventure, although his love for the charming woman seemed to increase daily, although she realized all his artistic ideals, his dreams of unattainable happiness; yet with his feelings, too, was

mingled a bitter drop, if not a sentiment for remosre, at the humiliation against which his manly pride rebelled.

Amid such magnificent scenery, far from the madding crowd, from the poisonous atmosphere of society, they began to sympathize with and understand one another better.

Far from the flattery and admiration of the world, Norin again became an artist. A higher aim hovered before his eyes; the desire to make his name worthy to rank with the great masters of the past by some perfect creation.

Earnestly he threw himself into the work, during which his keen intelligence could not fail to discover the faults in modern music, especially operatic, the prosaic insipidity of the acts, the frivolity of the ordinary composers, the prominence given to melody which spoiled all dramatic truth.

He recognized all those defects and wished to avoid them in his own works. His idea was entirely new; it was the combination of drama with opera, a blending of both in a higher unity in which poetry and music, the sister arts, should mutually aid one another and form a new work of art.

Ada was deeply interested in Norin's thoughts, and as she, with feminine quickness, drank in his ideas, and by her applause, her suggestions, helped to develop the end into the golden fruits with time, Norin felt surer of his object.

"Music," said Norin one evening, "is a woman, her nature love, her highest ornament innocence; but, as there is rarely a woman who answers to the ideal, so do we rarely find art in perfection. In the Italian opera, we find her a voluptuous woman, robbed of every deeper feeling, filled only with sensuality.

"On the other hand, French music is a frivolous coquette, she wishes only to be admired and not loved, she seeks only the gratification of her vanity, and her heart remains empty. Her cheeks are painted, her smile is affected."

"But," replied Ada, "you will acknowledge the worth of the German opera."

"Not the opera of the present day. With a few exceptions, the majority of our German operas of the day might be compared with a pious bigot who, instead of a heart, carries an old prayer-book in her withered bosom, and forces her soul into a moral bodice. The coquette at least forgets herself occasionally, and is caught in her own snares, but the prudent bigot never cherishes a spark of the warm, divine fire in her bosom. She is the Pharisee among women, who strikes her empty breast with hypocritical indignation and says: I thank thee, Lord, that I am not like this one!"

"You judge severely but not unjustly, for I can recall the ennui already occasioned me by several new composers. But how should woman, or rather true art, appear?"

"As a woman who really loves, who sacrifices herself without reserve, who desires nothing but to die in the arms of genius like Semele. The husband of that pure woman is the poet; from that combination of music and poetry, of womanly grace and manly strength, arises the true work of art."

"And do you hope to attain that grand aim?"

"At least I feel inclined to do so, and daily the ways and means grow clearer to me, although I do not know if my strength will hold out. How many have failed. I too may be led astray by a will-o'-the-wisp."

"But words are inadequate to express the overpowering feelings which possess one at the supreme moment; the mind is crippled, the imagination powerless, and at the moment of inspiration the lips are silent. The poet requires help, and he finds it in Music, in her harmony, her melody, which alone can, in her heavenly language, express the greatest joy and the deepest sorrow. In her kiss of love he recognizes the great mystery; from that warm embrace arises the true savior, from that the highest and best work of art is born!"

"And you will create it!" exclaimed Ada, intoxicated with love and enthusiasm, sinking into his open arms.

## VII

### TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

Now on foot, now in a light skiff upon the waters of the lake, Ada, by Norin's side, enjoyed the happiness never known to her before, of living with a beloved one far from the world, in a spot where nature and art, thought and mind, melted into one blissful harmony.

Their excursions became pilgrimages, indeed, to the sacred spots where before them had trodden the foot of genius. One of their first visits was paid to romantic Chillon, whose white walls rose like a swan from the waves.

Byron's muse, which sang in one of his finest poems, "The Prisoner of Chillon," the melancholy charm of the old building, the magnificent view of the Alps, enchanted the lovers like a magical potion.

In such a mood they entered the boat which awaited them to take them to their villa. The setting sun gilded the shores of the lake; rosy clouds, like angels' heads, floated on the sky, and the blue waters turned to a purple sea. Hand in hand the lovers sat in the skiff, which glided over the waves, and at every turn showed them new beauties.

Their hearts were so full that they could find no words, and could only express their feelings by glances.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked Ada, at length, breaking the silence.

"I am not thinking, I am dreaming of you, of our love."

"No dream can be as delightful as reality. Now only do I know what life is; to love and to enjoy."

"To love and to create; both powers are one, the common emanation of divinity. As I love, I compose the finest poem, a work of art for which our love furnishes me with material. As I gaze upon you, with your soulful eyes, at your lovely features, you seem to me as my embodied muse, I find in you and in our love the long-sought-for ideal."

"You will make me vain," replied she, with a blush, "although I should be delighted if my love could stimulate you."

"Oh!" cried Norin, with glowing eyes, "you do not know what a charm surrounds you at this moment. As I see you seated by my side, lighted up by the golden sunshine, your fair hair resembling an aureole, your eyes beaming with tenderness, your slender form encircled by my arm, leaning upon my breast, forgetting the world, giving yourself up entirely to love, you seem to me like the image of some poet of olden times; your eyes, your smile, our passion, the blue lake at our feet, the skiff which bears us along, all remind me of the pretty tradition of 'Tristan and Isolde,' and you furnish me with the best, the richest material for a new creation."

"I am not familiar with the tradition," replied Ada, with a smile, "so I cannot see the resemblance."

He told her the story of Tristan and Isolde that she might the better grasp his meaning.

When he had concluded, Ada murmured:

"Wonderful! The demoniacal power could not have been more forcibly portrayed. He who once tastes the intoxicating love-potion is lost."

"That was Tristan's and pretty Isolde's fate. Both tried to conquer their love, but it mocked at all restraint. No power on earth could keep them apart. In Isolde's arms the noble Tristan forgot his duty and his gratitude to the kindly king, his generous uncle."

"And the wife the fidelity she owed her noble husband," replied Ada, with a deep sigh.

"Intoxicated by the potion, they forgot the entire world, and even King Marke could not, when he discovered their guilt, kill them; he merely exiled them from his court. They wandered in the wilderness, until they found a cave in which they took shelter."

"And how does the story of Tristan and Isolde end?"

"It has no end," replied Norin evasively, "any more than had their love, which continued even in the grave."

When Norin ceased speaking, tears glistened in Ada's eyes. It seemed to her as if she had heard the story of her own life.

## VIII

### UNPLEASANT MEETINGS

That conversation left a slight sadness, a scarcely noticeable dissonance in Ada's sensitive mind, though that uneasiness soon yielded to Norin's tenderness.

He himself was in a state of most blissful agitation, caused by the discovery of the long-sought-for material, and without any hesitation he enthusiastically entered into his work. With wonderful ease he traced out the plan for the musical drama, by means of which he hoped to establish a new epoch in art. Scene for scene, act for act, was considered with Ada.

The happiest time of their love had arrived for both of them, as they were united by a common interest in that great undertaking.

By a constant interchange of thought they were drawn nearer one another, they grew daily more valuable, more indispensable one to the other. What the artist composed during the day, he read or played to Ada in the evening with his usual mastery and finish. Her clear judgment, unbiased by love, was his highest reward for his pains, and inspired him to new creations, while the insight which he accorded her into the secret nooks of his artistic mind, filled her with bliss and permitted her spiritual eyes to perceive the most delightful ideals.

When he composed, she generally sat by his side, for her mere vicinity, as he maintained, exercised an

inspiring influence over his work, her presence presented to him the heroine of his drama, beautiful Isolde, and excited his imagination by such a deception.

In order to complete the illusion, Ada, though not without a protest, yielded to his urgent and repeated request, and donned the old-German gown of blue velvet with costly embroidery, belted in by a pearl girdle, loosened her long, fair hair, which fell to her slender hips in waves, so that she really resembled the king's lovely child in the poetical tradition.

In that strange dress she seemed to herself bewitched, and her life at that time like a fairy-tale, a fantastic, blissful dream, from which she feared to awaken suddenly. In the midst of the enjoyment of the moment, involuntarily there crept over her a feeling of insecurity—as if over night the charm might vanish, as if some unforeseen storm must sever the light bonds of her happiness.

More than ever did she dread any contact with the outer world, which, however, could not be altogether avoided, for the presence of the celebrated artist and his secluded retreat could not long be kept secret.

With the pleasant season of the year came swarms of tourists, from all lands, to enjoy the beauties of Switzerland.

As much as possible the lovers tried to escape the curious glances of those people; still they could not avoid them altogether, unless they gave up their excursions entirely.

One of their favorite haunts was Clarens, rendered doubly dear to them by their remembrance of Rousseau and his "new Héloïse."

"To Clarens," said Norin one day, after having

worked steadily for several hours upon his new drama.

Arm in arm they left their dwelling and wandered between budding chestnuts and fragrant nut-trees through the valley, where every step reminded them of the poet and of the creations of his mind, of Julie's love, and of the struggles of noble Saint-Preux, with whom they sympathized more than ever.

As the lovers submitted to the influence of nature and of mind, and there forgot the entire world, fate, or the irony of fate, was preparing to bring about a meeting as unexpected as unpleasant for them.

Toward Clarens came a party of tourists, at whose head rode the romantic Leonore; behind her was her husband Baron von Gallen and the poetical counselor of the embassy, the faithful *cicisbeo* of the lady, who wished to spend her honeymoon in Switzerland and Italy, or, as she expressed herself, in the land of glaciers and of Hesperides.

The worthy vice-president of the Jockey Club, however, did not seem to be very much enchanted with that romantic pilgrimage, and his rosy, healthy face betrayed a certain ill-humor at that aimless wandering among the mountains, at the exorbitant hotel bills, the demands of the guides, foggy views, tiresome parties at which were served tough chamois-roasts, and sour wine at enormous prices.

The most tiresome thing which struck him, however, was the constant enthusiasm of his young wife, who, at every tree, before every cottage, burst into extravagant exclamations, and who pouted if he did not share her delight and did not agree with her in her admiration of every rock, every cascade.

"Dear Gallen," said his wife, "have you nothing to say of all these beauties of nature; has even magnificent Clarens left you indifferent?"

"I really do not know," replied he irritably, "what there is to be found here."

"Are you not reminded of Rousseau's Héloïse at the sight of these fields?" she asked, in a languishing tone.

"I remember having read the old story in my Baedecker," growled the baron, "but the forest in which the two lovers used to stroll, is no longer to be seen. The guide-book says that the owner had the timber cut down and sold it."

"Oh, the barbarian!" cried Leonore, indignantly.

"Probably they needed either the wood or the money, one cannot blame them."

"What? You excuse those unfeeling people, who destroyed, from sheer self-interest, the sacred grove which shaded the lovers?"

"I do not care if they only left enough wood for us to cook a decent dinner with. I have a ravenous appetite."

"Oh, my God, how prosaic!" sighed the romantic Leonore. "How can anyone think of such a common thing as the stomach at Clarens?"

"I believe that Julie did not live upon air alone, therefore I propose that without any further delay we repair to the hotel."

"If I am not mistaken," added the poetical counselor of the embassy, "the tavern at Clarens bears the pretty name of 'Julie's Bower.' We can therefore kill two birds with one stone; that is, dine, and drink to the memory of the charming Julie with a glass of champagne."

That proposition met with general approval, and the entire company set out for the hotel, where the baron ordered a fine dinner.

While it was being prepared, the young wife took up a newspaper lying on the table, in which she was soon deeply interested. A short notice which she chanced upon, excited her greatly.

"Read that," said she to the counselor, holding the paper toward him.

"What is it?" asked the baron.

"The celebrated Norin has, so the paper says, retired to a villa on Lake Geneva in order to complete a composition, which, it is prophesied, will be very successful, as he will take quite a new path in music. And Countess Harrer lives with him."

"What a terrible scandal!" cried Leonore. "Who would have believed that the little woman would have trodden under foot all the laws of propriety and of morality?"

"I cannot understand how it was that the count," replied the baron, "did not kill him. If such a thing should happen to me—"

"My dear Gallen! How can anyone make such a mark in the presence of a respectable woman."

"In such a case I would stand no joking," replied the baron, contrary to his usual phlegmatic manner. "I can stand a great deal, but when my honor is touched, I have no regard for anything. I would have settled that musician forever, so that all pleasure in his work would have disappeared."

"He does not seem to me as much to be blamed as the countess, who could forget herself so far. Were I to meet her accidentally, I should not recognize her, in spite of my former friendship for her."

"And I should treat that man with the most supreme contempt, were I to meet him."

With these heroic resolutions they were about to

take their seats at the table, when through the open door Norin entered, accompanied by Ada, in order to rest from their fatiguing walk.

The meeting, as unexpected as unwelcome, which could not be avoided, caused great embarrassment, which momentarily increased.

While romantic Leonore tried to appear as indifferent as possible, her heaving bosom, her glances filled with hatred, her mocking smile, betrayed a deep agitation at the sight of the, to her, once so dear virtuoso.

On the other hand, upon Ada's pretty face was an expression of painful emotion and doubt; in her soft eyes, on her pale face, were reflected all the conflicting feelings by which her heart at that moment was involuntarily besieged. With hands upraised, and a humble inclination, she seemed to beg for mercy.

So haughtily did Norin meet the baron's searching glances that the latter did not know just what to do to bring about the desired quarrel, until the clever counselor came to his aid, and whispered to him a thought for which the worthy vice-president had racked his brain in vain.

"Carry our plates into the garden!" he said, in a loud, majestic voice to the astonished waiter.

At the same time, with a gesture intended to be heroic, but which would have struck the disinterested bystander as ludicrous, he offered his wife his arm and noisily left the room, followed by the counselor and *cicisbeo*.

"The fool!" said the artist, shrugging his shoulders. "He can insult us no more than that absurdly vulgar woman and that weathercock of a diplomatist."

"And yet those people represent public opinion," said Ada, sadly, restraining her tears with difficulty.

"I did not think you so weak, I thought you had more self-possession," whispered Norin, with a frown. "Remember that we are not alone, that the other guests and the waiters are watching us."

Notwithstanding, Ada could not overcome her sadness, and even Norin felt more deeply wounded by the scene which had just taken place, than he would have acknowledged.

Sorrowfully they proceeded on their way homeward. Norin's efforts to make light of the matter, proved insufficient to banish Ada's melancholy, and he finally grew impatient, and for the first time reproached her for her nervous irritability, her capriciousness, by which, naturally, matters were made worse, and her tears flowed still more copiously.

So the beautiful day and the pleasant walk to Clarens ended unhappily.

# IX

## THE RETURN TO SOCIETY

After the event recorded in the preceding chapter, the lovers lived more retired than ever, and avoided still more carefully all contact with society, in order not to bring about similar scenes. Ada soon felt happy again in the solitude of which she had grown so fond, while Norin, on the contrary, experienced a certain unrest, which increased in proportion as his work, which occupied nearly all his time, drew to an end.

The sympathy and applause of the woman whom he loved could not content him altogether, although he valued her opinion highly. He longed to hear the views of the connoisseurs, to show his work to the world, and, above all, to see it represented on the stage.

Still he feared to express his thoughts, lest he might arouse Ada's suspicions or wound her. He essayed to appear contented, happy, although for some time he had not felt so, for he was more interested in, more anxious about the fate of his drama, than he suffered her to divine.

So, into their mutual relations, crept a certain falsity, while the artist tried to conceal his feelings and inclinations and to escape her watchful glances. Frequently he was surprised by a feeling of monotony, a yearning for diversion and greater excitement, against which neither his love nor the sight of nature could protect him

Clandestinely, as if committing a crime, he renewed his former ties, wrote and received letters, communicated with his musical friends and admirers, with various notables in the artistic world, and with influential patrons in whom he confided with regard to the progress of his work.

That news reaching the public through the newspapers, aroused general interest, once again called attention to the famous artist, and had the effect of spurring him on.

So in art, or rather in the artist's vanity, Ada found an invisible rival against which she struggled in vain, for daily the secret temptation grew more powerful, and it would only have required a trifling matter to separate him from his home, and to carry him back to the world.

Nor was the tempter lacking, for the Italian, Giuseppe Bertini, suddenly appeared unannounced at the villa in order to again connect the ties broken by the virtuoso's flight.

"He who seeks, finds," said the sly impresario. "Pardon me, but I could not go by without seeing you again, dearest maestro, even at the risk of being in your way."

"You need not fear that; you are always welcome," replied Norin, offering him his hand with a pleasant smile. "How have you fared since last we met?"

"Now well, now not so well. One must stretch one's self according to one's cloth, and wait for what time will bring."

"What news have you brought me? How does the world look?"

"Just the same as ever. The world is like a ladder: one mounts, the other descends. But that cannot in-

terest you, for, as I hear, you have become a hermit."

"Notwithstanding that, I am deeply interested in my art."

"The cat cannot let the mice alone, and we always return to our first love."

"I have, in the meantime, not been idle, but have completed a new opera."

"I know, I know," replied the Italian. "All the papers are full of it and the entire world is anxiously awaiting it. The reward will not be lacking."

"Have they then not forgotten me, and do they still speak of me as they did formerly?"

"Yes, but it is high time that you should do something. Out of sight, out of mind, and our fame melts like snow."

"What do you mean, Giuseppe?" asked Norin, anxiously. "You seem to wish to keep something from me."

"As it is won, so it is lost. The world has a short memory and a long hand. Among the blind, the one-eyed man is king. When the mill is closed, the donkeys dance."

"I beseech you, Giuseppe, to tell me plainly what you have in your mind."

"I will be as concise as you wish. In Paris, whence I came direct, a new artist has appeared who will strive with you for the laurels if you do not take time by the forelock. He has learned your pieces well, for he is a sly devil, and does not care if he is only a copy of you. He is being worshiped just as you were, and you are on the road to being forgotten."

"For such a bungler, who has not one original thought."

"The greater the rogue, the greater the luck. More-

over, he has the good fortune to be the natural son of a prince and diplomatist, who, of course, has introduced him to all his friends, who make much of him. The rich man has no lack of patrons."

"That Thalheim cannot be dangerous to me. Were I merely to move my left hand, he would lie upon the ground."

"That is right. Show that you are still alive, and that you are the same man. The dead are soon forgotten, and are always wrong. But you must lose no time. He who wishes to catch fish must rise early. To arms, dear maestro!"

Involuntarily Norin sprang up and hastened to the piano, over the keys of which his hands swept as if he wished to prove that he need fear no rival.

As he played the wily Italian exhibited the greatest sympathy; when he finished he cried: "Bravo, bravissimo! That I call a masterpiece; that will make a furore. You have surpassed yourself. With such music you could awaken the dead and rescue souls from purgatory."

"Do you really think so?" asked the flattered artist.

"I do not doubt for a moment but that there will be a great success; but one must strike while the iron is hot. Nothing venture, nothing have."

"How can I manage it, for I am bound here?"

"I understand. A woman and a trouble are always in the way. No rose without thorns; one can not have the sweet without the bitter. Love, too, has its trials; no fire without smoke."

"You will of course understand that I must take certain precautions."

"He who is too careful, spoils all. One stands principally in one's own light, and every one is his own

enemy. Well, I am agreeable; man's will is his happiness."

"Did you then think it unavoidable that I should appear in public? I have grown so fond of solitude."

"Every bird likes its nest, but everything has its time. You must not hide your light under a bushel, and of what use will your finest opera be to you if no one hears it? if you preach to deaf ears? He who changes his abode, changes his luck."

"That is what I fear. Of course, I see the necessity myself, but I cannot decide to give up this quiet life and the countess will not be able to entertain the thought, either."

"A too careful physician only aggravates the case. You can not remain forever in these mountains, and bury yourself alive. Will you look calmly on while someone else is stealing away your fame, and lay your hands idly in your lap while another rakes in the gold and the honors? You have only to raise a finger, and entire society will again lie at your feet; you have only to shake the tree, and the golden fruit will fall in your lap. The world belongs only to him who knows how to use it."

It scarcely required the sly agent's eloquence, in order to convince the artist of the necessity of returning to the scene of his former activity. The mere thought that in his absence a (to him) dangerous rival was celebrating triumphs, sufficed to reawaken his vanity, his ambition.

But he thought more of the fate of his new opera, upon which he built such hopes. From personal experience he knew only too well of the cabals and intrigues which enemies and opponents spared no important personage, and which he could only combat by his presence.

Thus exterior and interior influences, combined with a deep love of art, drew Norin once more toward the dangerous vortex which he had scarcely left. Notwithstanding that, he hesitated, partly from weakness, partly from love for Ada, to decide finally, deferring his decision from day to day and still trying to conceal his purpose from her. But the presence of the suspicious agent, several allusions he made, and Norin's evident excitement, filled her with fears and doubts which she could not explain.

She only breathed freely when the disagreeable Italian had gone, although the object of his visit remained a secret to her for some time.

In the artist's mind there was taking place a struggle between his love for Ada and love for his art; the peaceful happiness of the present and the alluring picture of the future. It was not an easy matter for him to give up his quiet retreat, the magnificent scenery, the pure pleasures of a better life, in exchange for the seductions and temptations of society.

More potent, however, than that thought, was the longing to see his masterpiece presented to the public, to see his plans realized. As long as he had worked at it, he had not thought of its presentation, of its success, of the voice of criticism, of the opinions of the public.

But now that his work was completed, that longing for praise, for recognition, the hope of success and triumphs, was re-awakened.

In his dreams it recurred to him, as if his child, the creature of his imagination, was beseeching him to free her, as if Tristan's and Isolde's shadows warned him of his guilt.

To that mood was joined the (to him) so strange feel-

ing of dependence; he was, in a measure, bound, robbed of his freedom. He could not, as formerly, follow every caprice, every fantastic fancy recklessly, for Ada's presence laid a certain restraint upon him, although the bond of roses seemed light, although he could so easily spare her love.

In the midst of his vacillation, he, and still more Ada, was surprised by a visit from the Duchess von Taland and her inseparable companion, Prince Egon von Schwarzfels. On her way to Geneva, where her only, tenderly loved daughter was being educated, in a select English *pension*, the duchess looked upon it as her duty to visit the countess, who was related to her, and the virtuoso whom she esteemed, heedless of the prejudices of the world for which she cared nothing.

Under the circumstances the meeting was very painful to Ada, but the mere presence of the couple delighted the artist, who gave himself up freely to the pleasure of which he had been deprived for so long. The short time was spent in animated conversation, in improvising from his new opera, which charmed his hearers and filled them with the greatest admiration.

The duchess was especially interested in the musical reforms proposed by Norin. Like most women she was ready for a new thought and easy to fill with enthusiasm, while the prince was equally delighted.

Both of them strengthened the artist in his resolution by their warm approbation and put an end to his indecision by offering him their aid in order to assure the representation and success of his opera. At the same time the duchess understood the difficult task of overcoming Ada's expected opposition by representing to her the necessity of such a sacrifice.

Reluctantly did Ada finally consent to leave the peaceful retreat to return to the world which she hated and which filled her with dire forebodings. But her love for the artist, the duchess' convincing arguments, the fear of appearing selfish in the eyes of her love, but above all the desire to see him happy, overcame all her opposition, so that at length she made the sacrifice, though with an aching heart.

Several weeks after the departure of their titled friends, the lovers, too, left their pretty villa on Lake Geneva to repair to the court of Grand Duchess Alexandrine, who, at the request of the duchess, appointed Norin "general musical director" and entrusted to him the leadership and production of her operas and the court concerts.

# BOOK III

# I

## A MARTYR TO TRUTH

In a retired street of the Residence lived the famous Doctor Steiner, in the third story of a modest house, with a view of the neighboring roofs and chimneys. Notwithstanding that restriction, the young student's study made a pleasant almost cozy impression.

Along the walls ran the valuable library, his only treasure, to increase which he avoided no sacrifice.

The brighter arts were not excluded. For there was the piano, and beside it the music stand, upon which lay Mozart's and Beethoven's symphonies, together with the best creations of Bach, Gluck, Handel and Haydn.

At the window stood the more convenient than elegant work-table, covered with manuscript, periodicals, and the latest productions of the book-market. Above these, stood, upon a console, a bust of Lessing, his great model, at the sight of whom Steiner strengthened himself in his struggle after light and truth.

He himself sat in an old, threadbare arm-chair, and wrote; but his thoughts that day for the first time wandered from his work to the pretty stranger whom, since that meeting at the Academy of Music, he could not forget.

His retired life, hitherto, had rendered the impression left by her strange appearance more powerful. Up to that time the young *savant* had led the life of a re-

cluse, a life dedicated to culture. Only during the past few days had he learned that the heart had claims as well.

He was the hero of thought, a striver and a martyr to knowledge—the son of a poor country clergyman. At his father's desire he had chosen the study of theology, and by his industry and zeal had become so prominent at the university that he aroused the attention and hopes of his teachers, who saw in him a new church-light.

But soon his own convictions proved to him that the pious belief of his youth was his belief no longer. Too frank and open to deceive, he renounced the sacred calling, to his parents' sorrow, and gave himself up to the study of philosophy.

The outcome of all his study was the production of a book under the title of "Christ and the Church."

For years no book had attained such success. Although counting in no way upon the favor of the majority of the people, it contained a clearness and pleasing style of representation seldom found in the works of German scholars.

So it became a success—the talk of the day, the subject of conversation among all educated men.

So much the greater became, therefore, the hatred and envy of his enemies, and especially of the theologists attacked by him. While all liberal organs accorded the scholar the greatest praise, the church reviews raised a cry of horror at the sacrilegist.

Friends and enemies struggled with much bitterness; in the course of a few weeks a flood of pamphlets containing enthusiastic articles and violent attacks appeared, and helped to make the author's name popular.

The excitement afforded the government an opportunity to take the long-sought-for action against the young man. They prohibited the dangerous book without being able to prevent its spread and influence.

But Steiner was forced to retire from the university and to give up his academical career, which was a great trial to him.

He was deeply affected by the sorrow he had involuntarily prepared for his parents; his angry father threatened to disinherit him unless he retracted his opinions. Then followed a struggle between his feelings and his duty.

What was the applause of the people to him compared with his domestic ties? It could not replace lost love. At the height of his fame, in the full enjoyment of his popularity, he felt lonely, forsaken and unhappy, because those nearest and dearest to him did not understand him and denied him.

And yet he could not, dared not turn back, dared not recall his own work, which was as the Truth to him.

He answered his parents' letter affectionately. He tried to justify himself by citing such men as Luther. But all in vain! He received no reply and his father's door was closed against him.

Expelled from the university, rejected by his family, all that remained to him was to follow a literary career.

Under his guidance the newspaper of the liberal party, which appeared under the title of "The German Thought," proved a great and unexpected success.

In proportion as the organ's influence increased, the number of his adversaries increased also.

Every hour brought him new trials which wounded him deeper, and tried his patience more sorely, in the

form of secret thrusts than open defiance would have done.

The government then interfered, and it seemed as if its object was to ruin Steiner.

But he would not be daunted; he patiently remained at his difficult post, constantly warring with his powerful adversaries. His convictions were unshaken, but he felt alone and forsaken; he longed for a heart in which he could confide, which would understand him, and which, when he showed signs of succumbing, would inspire him.

Never had he felt his loneliness so much as since the moment he had seen and known that mysterious stranger. An odd unrest, quite foreign to him, possessed him; his usual occupation wearied him, and he could not think as freely. He was absent-minded and irritable without knowing the cause.

Occasionally he found himself wishing that he might once again meet the charming stranger, but she seemed to have disappeared like something supernatural, without leaving any trace behind.

Yet he could not forget her.

## II

### THE ANONYMOUS POET

It was already dark when the scholar had finished his work, and sent it to the printer's, without experiencing that feeling of satisfaction which he usually enjoyed when a work was completed.

He lighted a lamp and took a book from the pile of new ones lying before him awaiting his criticism.

Usually the task was not a very pleasant one, and he was surprised to see upon the first page a thought which by its depth and originality attracted him. The poem which he had accidentally lighted upon, bore the title of "Magdalena," and depicted the struggles, the sufferings, the errors of a woman's soul.

There was something intoxicating about the work, a seductive power, which he could not escape. As he read, his heart throbbed faster, he grew feverishly excited.

Only a woman could have expressed such feelings thus. He longed to know the author who had been too modest to write her or his name upon the title page.

Quite filled with enthusiasm over the poem he had just read, the young *savant* wrote his criticism, which appeared in his journal, and aroused unusual comment. The voice of Steiner sufficed to awaken the highest interest in the book; so much the more because Steiner, on account of his strong non-party feeling and conscientiousness, was esteemed in restricted circles.

In addition to that there was the charm of mystery which surrounded the poet. Everyone was trying to solve the interesting problem in vain.

The young *savant* was in a strange mood, and he sought and found consolation, if not exactly in the wished-for measure, in his intercourse with the intellectual wife of his university friend, Eichler, who was a very eminent physician.

Julie's amiability soothed him and he gladly repaired to her home after his tiresome daily tasks were ended. In her he found that tender sympathy, that wonderful comprehension of his secret sorrows, which seems born in most women and seems to be based upon instinctive sympathy.

Without questioning him, she divined the cause of his sadness.

So it happened that he preferred her society to that of any other, and often visited his friend's house. Both husband and wife knew how to make life pleasant for themselves and for others, and collected about them a circle of interesting men and women who felt at home in those hospitable rooms, and always were glad to return.

Usually, once a week, on a certain evening, their friends assembled around their tea-table for a bright and interesting conversation which embraced the subjects of literature, art and politics.

There Steiner found the required recreation and diversion after his work.

Like the majority of her sex, Julie, happy herself, wished to make her friends happy as well. Her only weak point, at which her husband in his humorous way scoffed, was a constant striving to bring about marriages.

"You must marry," was her refrain. "I will choose a suitable wife for you."

Half in jest, half in earnest, Steiner protested against her efforts for his future.

In his present mood he was less inclined than ever to coincide with her ideas, and he had felt it incumbent upon him to make his visits somewhat less frequent of late, especially on her reception evenings, when she was, as a rule, surrounded by a host of more or less commendable candidates.

Only her repeated and urgent invitations brought him again to Julie's house, where he was received by her with her usual cordiality.

"That is right," said Julie, offering him her hand, "I should really be angry with you for remaining away so long; but you belong to those people with whom one can not be seriously vexed, and although you do not deserve any kindness, I have prepared a pleasant surprise for you."

"A surprise?" asked Steiner, in astonishment. "May I ask what it is?"

"That is my secret," said Julie, playfully.

"You really arouse my curiosity."

"Guess, and I will tell you if you are right."

"I am not very good at guessing."

"Try, perhaps you will be successful."

"Of course there is a lady in the question," said Steiner with comical irritation.

"You are indeed a veritable Œdipus, who solved the problem of the sphinx."

"With you it was not very difficult for I know only too well your weak point."

"How ungallant! As your punishment you shall find out nothing from me."

"And you are dying to tell your secret, just like the children when a Christmas-tree is at the door."

"You shall see that I can keep a secret better than some men."

So the doctor's wife changed the subject, inquired about his work and spoke of his fine criticism of the poem "Magdalena."

"I must confess," said Julie, "that for a long time no book has interested and charmed me as much as that excellent poem of which you seem to have so high an opinion. I could not sleep all night after I read it. The glow of passion, the enchanting language, excited me! Only a true poet could exercise such a power over the mind, could touch us so deeply and fascinate us so irresistibly. Involuntarily arises the desire to learn to know him, and to know more about him.

"Although I share that wish," replied Steiner, "I have given up all hope of seeing it fulfilled, for the author preserves the strictest secrecy as to his name."

"So you have no suspicion either as to who the unknown poet is?"

"Notwithstanding my efforts, I have not been able to find him out."

"But you, would no doubt, be pleased if the veil in which he envelops his person should fall away."

"Indeed, I usually care little or nothing for the personality of the poet, for I have only to do with his works. But under the present circumstances I must acknowledge my curiosity, for I am not less anxious than the rest of the world to discover the man who, in these days, combines such great talent with such rare modesty."

"Do you think that no one but a man could write such a poem? What if a woman should be hidden behind the veil?" asked Julie with a roguish smile.

"I do not attribute such power to a woman."

"Indeed! I thank you in the name of my sex for your kind opinion. You do not seem to be particularly fond of literary women."

"To be candid, I consider the part played by women in our literature as more hurtful than helpful, although, as you know, I always recognize true talent wherever I meet it. But the majority of authoresses suffer either from morbid sentimentality or frivolity. Their thoughts seldom rise above a certain narrow sphere. Only when those obstacles disappear, can woman's powers attain a rank in literature. Where a person like George Sand breaks through those ranks, it is generally done by force, at the cost of their happiness or of their womanliness."

"In that I cannot agree with you, and I hope to disprove that easily. Of late a number of authoresses have sprung up who justify the reputation of our sex and who have given to romance especially a grand impetus."

"Of course the novel is woman's peculiar field and I will gladly concede that in that line both in England and France at the present time, as well as in Germany, they exercise undisputed sway, unfortunately not in the interest of poetry and of good taste. I may acknowledge their delicate powers of observation, their knowledge of the human, especially the feminine heart; on the other hand, they lack the insight into the depths and heights of life, the broad horizon, the necessary objectiveness and impartiality. To you here belong the narrow confines of home, to a man the entire world. Your especial domain is love in all its gradations and vicissitudes. Though that passion is great and powerful, although it influences all relations, it

must not entirely govern the mind, suppress all other interests, as happens in most romances which are written by women for women. That is the way it happens that men read such books seldom."

"Our men have no taste for poetry; they are entirely absorbed by politics and material interests."

"It is true that the politics and the materialism of the present day threaten to supplant the interest in poetical creations; but in spite of that all educated men are ready to receive the true poet. They simply require more than mere amusement for a weary mind, more than those eternal love-stories, those hackneyed situations and characters. Would the modern novel, which, in my opinion, has a great future, fulfill its task, it must boldly grasp our entire social life in a poetical form, and reconcile the real with the ideal, combine truth with beauty, and show us the world and society in the mirror of a free, objective mind."

The entrance of the doctor, and the arrival of the expected guests, put an end to their conversation and gave it a general tone in which predominated the political situation of the day, which at that time took the place of all other interests.

## III

### THE SOLVED PROBLEM

The gentlemen were discussing the impossibility of a continuance of the present political system, and Doctor Steiner was leading the debate.

A slight noise at the door interrupted the speaker for a second; but he was so deeply interested in his weighty subject that he continued his theme without looking up, while the doctor's wife greeted the lady who entered, and pleasantly invited her to take a seat, from which, unnoticed, she could hear the debate.

The expressive features of the stranger betrayed a keen interest in the questions of the day; indeed so great was her interest that she paid little or no heed to the company, while, on the other hand, her peculiar beauty and striking appearance attracted much attention. Evidently she was one of those women who involuntarily and under all circumstances attract, and whenever they appear cannot long remain unnoticed.

She charmed less by means of the regularity of her features than by her bright animation, and the fire which sparkled in her dark eyes.

Her delicately arched nose and firm chin betokened a high degree of energy and will, and gave to the face a certain severity, which was, however, tempered by the soft, full lips, and the rounded cheeks; while the creamy complexion, at that moment slightly tinged with pink, reminded one of the peculiar coloring of

an antique statue. Her dress, too, although in no way striking, helped to make her conspicuous among the ladies of the company. A wreath of vine-leaves adorned her blue-black hair, which was cut short and curled, the full gown of white cashmere clung to her slender and yet well-developed form in graceful folds, and was clasped at the bosom with an artistic cameo set in gold.

Her entire appearance was at once so astonishing and attractive, that she aroused the curiosity of those present, who asked the doctor's wife many questions about her, as she had not yet found time to introduce the interesting lady.

"A patient of my husband's," she replied, evasively, but with a mysterious smile.

In the meantime the *savant* had exhausted his topic, and the discussion ended. But the merchant, Trangold, one of the most ardent and influential liberals, detained Steiner, whom he liked.

"Pardon me," said their hostess, approaching them, "for being forced to interrupt you; but a lady who is a stranger here, wishes to become acquainted with Doctor Steiner."

"Acquainted with me?" asked the latter, in confusion.

"You should not be surprised at that," replied Julie with a smile, "for you are a well-known author, and we women are always enthusiastic over every celebrity. Moreover, I promised you a surprise for this evening."

"The victim is ready," he replied with comical resignation. "I am at your service and yield to Fate."

"You shall repent that, and apologize to me."

With those words his friend seized his arm and led, or rather dragged him, to the chair on which sat the

"Pardon me," said the hostess, approaching them, "for being forced to interrupt you." p. 134.

strange lady. Then only did he glance at her, and recognized at once the interesting stranger from the Academy of Music, whose presence surprised him in the highest degree.

"Fraulein Livia Arvon, Doctor Steiner!" said Julie solemnly, taking a mischievous delight in his embarrassment.

Silently, incapable of uttering a word, the young scholar bowed, while a slight blush upon his usually pallid cheeks betrayed his inward emotion.

"Ah! we are old acquaintances," said the strange lady frankly, offering him, with charming grace, her delicate white hand, which he almost hesitated to accept. "As it seems," she added, "you have already forgotten our meeting."

"Would that be possible!" returned Steiner, still striving for composure, "but this meeting is so unexpected—"

"Did I not tell you," said Julie, "that a surprise was in store for you? You see, I kept my word, although you did not deserve it from me."

"Pardon, pardon!" besought Steiner. "How could I suspect such a delightful surprise?"

"The surprise," said Livia pleasantly, "is only the incognito of Providence, which loves the strangest forms and disguises. As a consequence of that swoon, in which you came to my aid, resulted a delicate condition, whose precursor that attack probably was. I considered it necessary to seek medical advice, and found in Herr Eichler a clever physician and sympathetic friend, who after my recovery gave me everything that I lacked; a home which took the place of home, a tender, loving sister whom I found in this noble woman, in our mutual friend, Julie."

"That was not very difficult," replied the enthusiastic Julie, "for one only needs to learn to know you in order to love you. Such talent, such—"

"Did you not bind yourself to secrecy?" threatened Livia, with uplifted finger. "Not another word, or you will force me to leave the company."

"You are the most obstinate person I know," said Julie, good-naturedly, "and yet one must like you, *nolens volens*. From the very first I was drawn toward you so instinctively, that I used the familiar form 'thou,' of which I am generally so chary."

"You made me inexpressibly happy, for you appeared to me in my loneliness as a rescuing angel. Through you I again learned to love the world, and became reconciled to my fate."

"For heaven's sake," cried Julie, "do not relapse into your former melancholy, from which I extricated you with difficulty. You would not believe," said she, turning to Steiner, "how much trouble my new friend occasions me. Only with the greatest difficulty could I persuade her to emerge from her solitude, and to appear here to-night. I believe that if she had not known you were to honor us, she would never have consented."

"I admit frankly," said Livia, "that I longed to express to you my thanks, for I am more deeply indebted to you than you are aware of."

"You can say all that at the table," said the doctor's wife. "You will have ample time there to become better acquainted."

With delight Steiner obeyed that indirect invitation, and offered Livia his arm, in order to conduct her into the dining-room, where he took his seat beside her. Soon he was deep in conversation with her, for she conversed with him as freely as she would have with an old, trusted friend.

Many of her thoughts, her peculiar pathos, and the almost poetical expression of her speech, struck Steiner. At times it seemed to him that he had heard or read the same thoughts, but he sought in vain to discover the original source of those reminiscences. It might have been an association of ideas which reminded him involuntarily of the much-talked-of anonymous poem, "Magdalena," and of the still unknown author, and caused him to ask Livia if she had read the new work.

Her sudden blushes, her visible embarrassment, must have impressed him so much the more, as his question was quite innocent. Apparently she struggled with herself before she could reply.

"You seem to know the poet?" asked he, possessed with a sudden pleasurable thought.

"What makes you think so?" she replied, evasively.

"If I am not very much mistaken, you yourself are the gifted authoress."

"Oh!" she whispered, with a blush, "I can and will not deceive you longer. To you alone will I tell the secret which is as yet known only to my friend and to her husband. As I have entrusted to you that secret which the claims of gratitude have drawn from me, I count upon your silence, for the world must never know that I wrote that book."

"I thank you for that proof of your confidence, and I shall keep my word to you, although I think your modesty is carried too far. Why should not the world know and honor the poet?"

"What do I care for the world?" replied Livia with a contemptuous curl of her pretty lips. "I am satisfied with the praise and sympathy of my friends, among whom I shall count you from now on."

## IV

### AT THE EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

From that evening Steiner loved the handsome, talented poetess with all the passionate fervor of a heart which Cupid's arrows had never touched. His enthusiastic friend encouraged his inclinations.

That enjoyable evening was followed by not less enjoyable days and hours, which increased their mutual admiration the better acquainted they became and the more they learned to esteem one another.

Livia's conduct was incomprehensible to Julie; she met Steiner in the kindest, freest manner; but his deeper feelings, his wishes for a more lasting, closer union, she did not seem to share, and when he allowed himself to be carried away by his passion, she gazed at him, half pained, half surprised, so that he did not dare to continue the confession upon his lips, lest he might wound and lose her.

Encouraged and repelled by her at the same time, he continually hovered between blissful hopes and melancholy resignation, between the most perfect confidence and dire despair.

But that mixture of sweet torture and painful bliss only served to fan the flame of his love.

While he was contented if he could only see and hear Livia speak, the doctor's wife pursued her object with indefatigable zeal, not allowing herself to be frightened off by any further opposition.

"I will not," said she one day to Livia, "conceal from you any longer the fact that I cannot understand your conduct toward Steiner. As I know you too well, I do not think that you are practicing any coquettish arts with regard to him. But, if you are not blind, you must surely have noticed that the good doctor loves you with all his heart and has no other wish than to make you his forever. He is not only an honorable man in the fullest sense of the word, but he is very talented, and in every way worthy of you."

"You cannot think more highly of him than I do myself," replied Livia gravely, "and I confess frankly that he is the only man for whom I feel absolute respect, and the warmest friendship."

"Notwithstanding that, however, you will not give him your hand, and become the wife of the excellent man, who would protect and cherish you. Are you not, as you have told me, since your father's death, perfectly independent and responsible to no one? What can prevent you, if you do not love another?"

"I love no other man," replied Livia with a blush, "but I prefer my present independence."

"You do not yet know that women gain more by happiness and contentment, than by freedom."

"But love, like every other sentiment, is subject to change, and can only too easily turn to indifference, apathy and hatred."

"For that very reason marriage seems to me so much the more necessary, because it steadies the fleeting inclinations, prevents that easy change of feelings, and gives to the woman the necessary protection in her family."

"Is there then," cried Livia, almost angrily, "no other alternative than marriage? Can there not be,

between a man and woman who mutually esteem one another, a purer, passionless tie which is founded upon a higher basis than that of the body and Mammon? Why should friendship be confined to those of the same sex? It would be sad were such the case. But experience has, fortunately, disproved such a false acceptation. It has been proven that there is a possibility of a pure union of souls, free from every earthly tie, from every oppressing force which only destroys love. In such a compact I will give Steiner my hand, with all my heart; but more I could not promise him, did I wish to."

"Think of what you are doing," replied her friend. "Would you really rob the noble man of all hope?"

"Do not urge me farther," besought Livia, "and do not be angry with me, if perhaps by my refusal I may wound your and him. You do not know how difficult that reply is for me, but I owe him and you the truth."

"I still hope," said Julie, "that time will modify your views with regard to marriage, that sooner or later you heart will learn to know the bliss of love."

"No, no!" returned Livia, smiling sadly. "Let me remain as I am. But if you love me, do not mention the subject, to me so painful, again, or you will force me to remain away."

"You are and will always be," said Julie, "a strange creature. That which delights other girls, the suit of a brave man, makes you sad. One would almost think you had some unfortunate love affair."

Livia did not reply, but the gloomy expression upon her lovely face warned the doctor's wife that a continuation of that conversation would wound her friend, so Julie urged her no farther, although she did not

give up the hope of some day overcoming her friend's prejudices against marriage. Indeed, Livia still received Steiner in the most unembarrassed manner, without betraying to him the clumsy endeavors made by her friend.

In his company she often visited the various museums and public institutions of the Residence, as well as the annual exhibition of paintings, which attracted a large number. Under Julie's chaperonage they wandered among the art treasures, through the magnificent rooms, whose walls were hung with paintings. Livia here showed an extensive knowledge of art, and often surprising judgment of the latest painters and their works.

One portrait in particular, beside that of an aristocratic lady in an elegant toilette, her voluptuous form enveloped in a costly ermine mantle, attracted in particular the female portion of the visitors to the exhibition. It represented a young man in a gold embroidered uniform, a manly Adonis.

Upon Livia, too, that portrait seemed to make a deep impression, for at the sight of it she involuntarily uttered a slight exclamation, which was, however, not heard by her friends, for they were at that moment examining the portrait of the lady.

She had, therefore, sufficient time in which to regain her self-possession before Julie and Steiner approached her; nevertheless she was so agitated that her pallor struck her friend.

"What ails you?" asked Julie, anxiously. "You look so strange, so ill."

"It is nothing," said she in confusion, "merely a slight faintness, owing to the heat and to the crowd."

"Let us leave the exhibition," said Steiner. "A short

walk through the park will surely do you good and revive you."

Mechanically she obeyed the advice of the faithful friend, whom she permitted to lead her out of the room. Silently she walked beside her companions, who were conversing about the exhibition, and more especially about the two portraits which, as Livia knew, represented the Prince von Schwarzfels and the Duchess von Taland.

As Steiner criticised the artist's work, Livia suddenly, but with apparent indifference, asked: "Do you know Prince Schwarzfels?"

"Who does not know the prince," replied Steiner, with a slight tinge of irony. "It is almost impossible to evade him, he puts himself forward to such an extent. He is at home everywhere, on the oratorical platform and in the salon. He is a typical modern character, for in him are combined the most contradictory qualities, courtly magnanimity and diplomatic slyness, mediæval chivalry and modern frivolity, the romanticism of a troubadour, the love of adventure of a Don Quixote, the corruptness and dissoluteness of a Richelieu, the poetry of a Byron and the perfidy of a Talleyrand."

"You seem to delight in paradoxes," said Livia, somewhat sharply. "Such a character seems to me impossible."

"The prince is, as I have already said, only the type of his times—a type which has no character. That is the curse of the present day, which possesses everything; knowledge, intellect, and talent, but no energy and morals, no faith nor idealism. As in the old fairy-tale, at the cradle of the modern world all the good fairies stationed themselves in order to endow the child with their finest gifts; the evil fairy who was not

invited changed all their good gifts into bad ones. So it is with Prince von Schwarzfels; his courage appears as haughtiness, his courtliness makes of him an adventurer, his amiability becomes coquetry, his good-nature, frivolity, his elegance, infidelity and perfidy."

"I know those people," replied Livia, sadly. "They resemble the Fata Morgana, which deceives the eyes of the wanderers in the desert. When they draw nearer, the charming phantom vanishes, and they find nothing but gray fog and sand, vain lies, and hollow pretense."

"Such a man of pretense," continued Steiner, without perceiving her excitement, "is the Prince von Schwarzfels, an accomplished actor who knows how to undertake well any role; to-day the enthusiastic lover, to-morrow the dissipated *roué*, now the brave hero, now the reckless schemer."

"An actor, nothing more than a miserable actor," exclaimed Livia, with a bitter laugh.

Amazed at her unexpected violence, Steiner gazed at her in surprise, but quickly controlling herself, she besought him to continue his interesting conversation.

"What the prince is not, he appears to be, and indeed with such an art, that he almost is what he seems to be, so that he even can deceive the closest observers. He is in politics, as in love, without faith and trust, striving only for the success of the moment, indifferent to all morals and propriety; an adventurer, a gambler at the faro-bank of life."

"The adventurer should be unmasked, the world should have its eyes opened," replied Livia, her eyes sparkling. "You, above all, doctor, seem to be capable of attacking the prince, for you know him so well and can see through him."

"I must not come too abruptly, for the prince is

absurdly vain. He cannot do without the applause of the public, if he does frequently ignore public opinion. At any price, he tries to awaken attention, indifferent as to in what way. Society and politics, friendship and love, intellect and talent, serve him as food for his vanity. An opponent wounded in a duel, an eloquent speech, a piquantly-written book—for the prince has, as you probably know, also appeared in the guise of an author—even public scandal, a compromised woman, a betrayed love, a broken heart, a reputation ruined forever, are to him only the desired means to his end. The modern Alcibiades would not even shrink from a crime, if he could only be talked of, and could wrap himself gracefully in the tattered, blood-stained garment of guilt—"

"Oh, how true, only too true!" murmured Livia, forgetting herself.

# V

## DARK EXISTENCES

In front of the northern gate of the Residence, almost at the extreme end of the city, in the midst of vegetable gardens, smoking factories, and vacant lots, lay a small, one-story building, which was rented by its owner, an old gardener, as a summer-house. Notwithstanding the lateness of the season, new tenants arrived —two ladies who, either led away by the reasonable price, or from preference for a peaceful, retired life, chose that secluded quarter and settled in it.

With the exception of the milk-wagons, drawn by dogs, and the doctor's carriage, no vehicle passed through that lonely street, and the postman was their only visitor.

These ladies rarely left their dwelling, and then only to obtain the fresh air, or to visit the theater, opera, and concert, where, as a rule, they hid themselves, heavily veiled, in the least conspicuous seats, or in a dark box.

This happened, likewise, on the evening on which the celebrated Norin gave his first concert, only with this difference, that the younger of the two went out alone, for the elder, who was the aunt, was detained at home by a sick headache. As the pain, instead of decreasing, grew more violent, she was forced to retire. Her eyes involuntarily closed and she sank into a deep sleep, from which she was awakened several hours

later by the loud chiming of a Schwarzwald clock.

"Already eleven!" cried she, in affright. "And Livia has not returned. What does that mean?"

Uneasy at her niece's long absence, Johanna Wilmer, as the elder lady was called, rose from her couch and hastened to the window, in order to watch for her niece. But no one was to be seen in the deserted street, not a footstep was to be heard.

Her anxiety and impatience increased momentarily, for she feared some accident to the unprotected woman. She reproached herself for having urged her niece to attend the concert, for she had wished to remain at home, and to care for the invalid. Filled with vague suspicions and dread, the lady determined to awaken the maid and the landlord, in order to search with them, notwithstanding her weakness, for the missing one.

She dressed herself hastily and seized the lamp standing upon the table, when the door suddenly opened, and upon the threshold appeared Livia as pale and agitated as a ghost.

At that unexpected sight her aunt uttered a piercing cry, her hands trembled so that she almost dropped the lamp.

"Livia!" cried she, "what has happened to you? You look like a corpse."

"That is possible," replied the latter, sinking into the nearest chair. "I have seen a ghost! I have seen *him.*"

"You are mistaken. Think. Whom have you seen?"

"*Him! Alfred von Geldern!*"

"You see him everywhere, because you think of him constantly."

"No, no! I could not have been mistaken!"

"But I think your over-excited mind has again deceived you."

"This time I am only too sure. Nature could not create his likeness twice; those eyes, that smile, no other man in the world possesses. I should recognize him among thousands, were he to appear before me as beggar or prince, in a torn coat or a dazzling uniform, upon the street or in the salon. His image is so fresh in my heart that no power in the world, neither time nor distance, could erase it."

"You are beside yourself," said her aunt. "Try first of all to collect yourself, and tell me as nearly as you can where you thought you saw him."

"Yes, you are right, I must first collect my thoughts. My head is as confused as if I had a heavy dream, and yet I cannot doubt the truth. Let me think."

For some time Livia sat there thoughtfully, her pretty head resting upon her hand. After a long pause she seemed to have recovered herself sufficiently to be able to make the wished for explanation.

She then told her aunt what she had seen at the concert-hall; of her unexpected meeting with her lover, whom, from a conversation overheard, she discovered to be Prince von Schwarzfels, of his attention to the lady of rank, of his infidelity to her, of her swoon.

"And Alfred? Did he not notice you, recognize you?"

"I do not know, for I was borne away unconscious. A young man whose name, by reason of his literary activity, was known to me, took me from the crowd to the intendant's house, where, after some time, I recovered myself sufficiently to thank him."

"It all sounds so strange, so like an adventure, that I really do not know what to think," replied her aunt,

after some consideration. "I cannot yet believe that *Alfred von Geldern and Prince von Schwarzfels are one and the same person.* What reason could have actuated him to conceal his proper name from you, and to play such a venturesome game?"

"I only know that Alfred is alive and the rest does not trouble me."

"What will you do if your suspicions prove to be true?"

"Can you ask? To-morrow I shall go to the prince and claim my rights," replied Livia, with mournful decision.

"Do not be too hasty!" warned her aunt. "A careless step might spoil all, might compromise you. The whole affair seems to me so mysterious that I cannot help but advise you to be very prudent. Think of your embarrassment should you have been mistaken; if, on seeing the prince more closely, you should be convinced that you were mistaken, that a striking resemblance to Alfred von Geldern misled you. What a painful position for you, what danger to your future! You must not risk your reputation, your life's happiness, so lightly."

"You know that I have suffered for months, that I cannot bear this uncertainty any longer."

"It will only be a matter of a few days in order to learn the truth, and to prove the identity of the Prince von Schwarzfels. For that four eyes are better than two, which are easily dazzled by love and passion. As the prince is a public character and belongs to the most prominent residents of the Residence, it will not be difficult for us to see him again, and to obtain information as to his life and deeds. When we have obtained the required certainty, it will be time enough to act."

"You are right, that will certainly be the best thing that I can do, in my peculiar situation. I will wait a few days, although I am sure this time that I have not been deceived."

"And should you be right, should Prince von Schwarzfels have deceived you under the name of Alfred von Geldern?"

"Then," replied Livia, resolutely, "my revenge shall be as great, and greater than his crime."

## VI

### A BETRAYED WOMAN

Not until after midnight did Livia seek her couch and then, in spite of her exhaustion, she could not rest. She was too excited to be able to sleep, and the memory of her past disturbed her.

Once more she lived through, in her imagination, those blissful hours and days which she had enjoyed by the side of the beloved man, upon that solitary island where she had first met and learned to know him. It was during the summer just past, when she, for the benefit of her health, and accompanied by her aunt, visited a resort up to that time little known, but of late becoming quite fashionable.

For hours Livia would sit upon the shore gazing at the bluish-green waters, listening to the rolling of the waves, inhaling deep breaths of the bracing sea air. Many a day would Livia spend in her favorite spot, reading Heine's poems or Byron's sonnets, when she was not making plans for her own future.

Her kind, but weak father, a wealthy land-owner, paid little or no heed to his daughter's education; and the child, after her mother's death, was left entirely to herself.

She would often leave her home for days at a time to wander in the woods, seeking berries with the village children, or lying upon the soft moss in some

secluded nook listening to the rustling of the trees, the noise of the woods.

Her romantic inclinations were increased, when, at her mother's death, her aunt, Johanna Wilmer, came to the house and undertook the neglected training of the girl and the care of the household.

The old lady, who had been a governess in various aristocratic houses, was well-informed, and soon exercised a great influence over the talented child's impressionable mind, for she treated the motherless girl tenderly, probably cherishing in secret the hope of winning, sooner or later, the hand of her wealthy and still handsome brother-in-law.

Unfortunately, her expectations were nipped in the bud; for, in the course of time, Livia's father married the daughter of a neighboring land-owner. Notwithstanding that circumstance, Johanna maintained her position, though very much disappointed at the failure of her plans.

She and Livia, therefore, formed an alliance, admitting into it a third person, a candidate for a teacher's office, Herr Römisch, who instructed Livia in music and the sciences.

He supplied the ladies with books, magazines and newspapers, the contents of which were hastily devoured by Livia. As once she had wandered in the woods dreaming of a magic world, she now sat until midnight engrossed in her books, and solving the great problem of existence.

Her surroundings were not congenial to her, her father could not understand her, and her step-mother's jealousy of her rendered their relations unpleasant.

For years she lived in a world of her own creation. At length a suitor presented himself whom her step-

mother and her father favored. But neither coaxing nor threats could bend the girl's strong will.

She was meditating flight in order to escape those persecutions, when her father's sudden death left her free to follow her own inclinations.

Unnerved by the continual strife and the shock of her father's death, Livia repaired to the resort prescribed for her, where, under the care of her motherly friend, she soon grew stronger and regained her usual health and mental vigor.

One day, busied with her plans for the future, when she intended to travel, to learn to know the world, to visit poets and artists, to lead an ideal life, she sat by the sea, when she was disturbed by a loud report. In affright she dropped the book which she held in her hand.

When she looked up, a sea-gull, its white plumage saturated with blood, lay at her feet, while before her stood a young man in a shooting jacket, who begged her pardon politely for having startled her.

After having exchanged a few words with her, he proceeded on his way. Involuntarily her eyes followed the huntsman's slender form until it disappeared.

That adventure excited her fancy. Although he had uttered only a few words, those few words, his entire bearing, betrayed a certain aristocracy, and a romantic atmosphere surrounded the stranger.

Livia's curiosity was aroused and unconsciously there arose in her heart the desire to see that man again.

She gazed almost indifferently at the sea, she listened absently to the rolling of the waves. More than ever did she long for human companionship. Even in her dreams did she see the form of the hunter. Her sleep was restless, she awoke with a painful sensation which she could not describe.

Before her stood a young man in a shooting jacket. p. 152.

The next morning, as she sat with her aunt in the tiny garden belonging to their modest abode, the maid came to tell her that a strange gentleman wished to speak to her.

It was the huntsman, who had brought her lost book. He had, he said, found it by the sea, and had picked it up with the intention of handing it in person to its pretty owner, and in that manner making her acquaintance.

In order not to appear rude, Livia asked him to be seated. Quickly they entered into a conversation, for which the book found, Heine's "Lieder," offered the richest material.

Filled with admiration Livia listened to his words, and when he rose to take his leave and begged to be permitted to repeat his visit, she could not refuse his request.

Perhaps, under other circumstances, Livia would have been more prudent and reserved; but the loneliness of the island, the freedom of life at a summer resort, the longing for intellectual intercourse, made her less careful, and daily favored an increase of intimacy.

Soon he was no longer a stranger, although he observed a certain reserve with regard to his personal affairs, which only served to increase Livia's interest in him.

Only by degrees did she learn from him that he came from a noble family, for his name was Alfred von Geldern. As he told her later, he was forced, as the result of a duel, in which he had mortally wounded his adversary, to conceal himself on that lonely island, in order to there await the result of that unfortunate affair of honor.

Livia did not dream of doubting that plausible story,

and with implicit faith she yielded to the affection inspired within her by the agreeable, intelligent man.

At his request she permitted him to accompany her upon her walks; she sat by his side in the light boat which danced upon the waves in the moonlight. Enraptured she listened to the stories of his interesting adventures and meetings with the most celebrated men and women, to descriptions of his journeys through France, Italy, and Spain.

But with still greater rapture did she listen to the confession of his love, which she returned with all the fervor of her heart. By the quiet waters where they had first met, with passionate kisses they vowed eternal fidelity to one another.

No one knew of her happiness with the exception of the faithful friend from whom Livia had no secrets. Still, even from her did she conceal the fact that at Alfred's urgent request she had been secretly married to him, as she would not yield to him only as his wife.

Not without hesitation had she suffered herself to be persuaded to take that venturesome step; but his love, his entreaties, her inexperience and blind faith, the romantic charm of a secret marriage, surmounted all opposition.

In the presence of two inhabitants of the island, and a strange clergyman, she became Alfred's wife. In her bliss she forgot the world and her family.

For several weeks Livia lived with her husband upon the lonely island, never dreaming of the possibility of a separation. Alfred was the most tender, most thoughtful of husbands, the embodiment of all her ideals. But for some time she fancied she had noticed a certain depression, which he tried to hide from her. More especially did he seem to be troubled since the

receipt of a letter which seemed to annoy him greatly. His mirth was forced, and upon his open brow lay a dark shadow.

Anxiously she sought to discover the cause of his sorrow, and only after repeated urging did he confess that his mother, who was seriously ill, wished him to return to his home, where, apart from her condition, family matters required his presence.

Livia would not have loved as she did had she not advised him to fulfill his duty and to leave all thought of her out of the question. She herself urged him to go, until finally he yielded, though apparently with reluctance.

The pain of parting was somewhat assuaged by the hope of meeting again, for he promised to return as quickly as possible. Letters were exchanged, and in them she was enabled to pour out the wealth of her heart and mind to her beloved husband.

But in a short while his letters grew shorter and rarer, owing to the press of business, as he said, until finally they ceased altogether. That silence rendered Livia uneasy, yet she did not doubt his fidelity. On the contrary she feared that something had befallen him, that his mother was dead, or that he was ill. With it all she was obliged to conceal her anxiety, and to make no effort to obtain news of him, for fear of injuring him, as she knew the duel was not forgotten, and his freedom was threatened. Then, too, his mother, who cherished aristocratic prejudices, must not find out, upon her sick-bed, about their secret marriage.

For those reasons, upon his departure, Alfred had requested her to be very careful and not write to him under his own, but an assumed name. A letter might easily go astray, or even fall into the wrong hands.

It was not difficult for her to find reasons for his surprising silence by means of which she tried to deceive herself. But at length sorrow and anxiety conquered her, so that she could not conceal the secret of her life from her friend any longer.

With amazement, but at the same time with mistrust, did Johanna hear the story of the secret union. She did not conceal her fear, her doubts, and strengthened Livia in her determination to leave the island and to repair to Alfred's home to inquire about him.

She did so, but no one in that neighborhood knew of a family of the name of von Geldern, nor had they ever known of them. All inquiries were vain and only served to convince her aunt that the name as well as the other circumstances had been invented simply to delude Livia.

The unhappy woman could not believe in such unheard of treason, in such deceit, and therefore tried to excuse the man she still loved. Her faith clung to the slightest straw, and she, in spite of all the proofs, did not give up the hope of finding him less culpable than he appeared to those who were disinterested.

At length, however, after repeated, fruitless efforts to establish his innocence, Livia felt that he must be guilty. She still persisted in her search for him with all the feverish excitement of her passionate nature. From land to land, from city to city, she followed his traces, until a faint hope led her to the Residence, where she lived at first in the strictest seclusion, until involuntarily she was drawn from it by circumstances which arose.

## VII

### THE MEETING

In Prince Schwarzfels' elegant ante-room lounged his servant, so-called "handsome Henry," while his master, after a night of dissipation, was slumbering in his luxurious room.

Only after the bell had been rung repeatedly did the lackey make up his mind to rise from his comfortable arm-chair, and to open the closed door in order to refuse admittance to the untimely visitor.

The, to him, not surprising sight of a veiled lady, seemed, however, to soften him more than if there had presented itself to him the face of a Jewish or Gentile creditor.

Handsome Henry was too familiar with the prince's relations, too deeply initiated in the mysteries and gallant adventures of his master, not to assume a pleasant air, when he saw that he had to deal with a representative of the fair sex.

But at the same time he knew, from his long years of experience, that there were among the ladies those whose visits were more unpleasant than those of the coarsest usurers.

Therefore handsome Henry preserved the requisite foresight and reserve toward the strange lady, suspicious to him, owing to her veil.

"Can I speak to his highness?" she asked in an unsteady voice.

"I am sorry, but his highness requires rest, and I have the strictest orders not to disturb him."

"My business is urgent, and cannot be deferred."

"I suppose not," replied the servant, with an impertinent smile. "So say all the ladies who wish to see the prince."

"Knave!" cried she, indignantly, throwing back her veil.

Was it the sight of her sparkling eyes or a sudden memory? But handsome Henry seemed paralyzed and made not the slightest effort to restrain the lady when she, without deigning to speak to him or to glance at him, passed him by and opened the nearest door.

"A pretty mess," murmured the terrified lackey, staring after her as if he had seen a ghost. "Let the prince find some way to get rid of her. If she recognized me, I am lost. I must not see her again."

As handsome Henry withdrew, in order to escape the lady, she reached, unhindered, the study in which the prince, in a light house-coat, lay upon a luxurious divan and seemed indeed to be asleep.

Eagerly she gazed upon the features only too familiar to her—at the sight of them her last doubts disappeared and she felt convinced that she had not been mistaken.

Livia, for it was she, had at length, with the help of her friend, established the identity of the prince with her faithless husband, which was easily done, for he belonged to the public characters of the Residence, and she had often opportunities of watching him unnoticed.

She was determined to bring him to justice, and to present her claims to him. Yet she trembled before the decisive moment, at that first meeting, after so long a separation.

Her heart besieged by hatred and love, fear and hope, she waited until he awoke. He was still sleeping peacefully, unaware of her presence; he smiled in his sleep; no doubt he was dreaming of another woman, of a fortunate rival, of that proud, voluptuous duchess.

Involuntarily she sighed, her trembling lips softly murmured his name.

The prince opened his eyes, but fancied he was still dreaming, when he saw before him the deserted woman.

"Livia!" cried he.

Only after a painful pause did the prince regain his composure, of which her sudden appearance had robbed him.

"Pardon me," said he, with a bewitching smile, "for allowing you to surprise me, and for not welcoming you warmly! But you are in your house and mistress here. Permit me, as your servant, to remove your heavy shawl, hat and veil, which deprives me of the sight of your charms: How beautiful you are! Still a dark shadow clouds your clear brow. Let me drive it away with my kisses, let me drive it away with the breath of love, as in those poetical days, which I have certainly not forgotten."

But the prince was mistaken in thinking that he could appease Livia's anger as he had so often done with others of his acquaintance. With evident indignation, almost with loathing, she thrust aside his hand, while a burning glance cowed even the accomplished libertine to such an extent that he scarcely dared to make a second attempt.

"Ah!" said he in a soothing tone, "you are very hard upon me, harder than I deserve; you seem indeed implacable, pitiless. Day and night your image hov-

ered over me. More than once I was about to return to you in order to cast myself at your feet, and to beg for your forgiveness, which you would surely have refused me if—"

"Enough!" interrupted Livia with a bitter smile. "Why this dissembling since I know all, your name, your rank, your entire past."

"So much the easier," responded the prince, "can I hope for your forgiveness. You will now appreciate so much the better my peculiar position, will understand many things, excuse many things, will acknowledge that I could not, without danger, commit certain actions. Though I must confess that I have erred, I am in no way as guilty as you seem to think, and it will not be difficult for me to justify myself if you will listen to me calmly. Your love will exempt the sinner, or at least pardon him."

"Speak not of love," she replied. "Do not desecrate that pure feeling, that most sacred of names. You simply wish to deceive me again, but you will not succeed. Can you deny that you betrayed my trust, deceived me, abused my innocence? Dare I trust you again since I know that everything about you, even your name, is one great lie, that your words, your promises, are as false as yourself?"

"Those are bitter reproaches; but you forget the peculiar relations, those almost indissoluble bonds which my birth, rank and position impose upon me. I in no way deceived you when I told you of the obstacles in the way of our marriage; they existed then, and still unfortunately exist, as you no doubt see. Neither did I deceive you when I told you of my mother's illness and of her desire to see me again. The separation from you and my return to my home

was a sacred duty which I could not escape without bringing upon myself a heavy responsibility. Neither was the duel a lie. Only one piece of deception I have to reproach myself with; that I concealed from you my true name, even when you had a right to my secret. It was a weakness, a romantic caprice, which you must excuse when you learn the cause from me. Yes, I wanted to be loved by you only for my sake; to have only myself, not my rank, to thank for your heart. Now condemn me, if you can, but I know that you will forgive me if I failed in my duty from vanity, or exaggerated delicacy, and deceived you."

"Oh, how gladly," returned Livia, "would I exonerate you, but I dare not. Did I wish to overlook your lack of faith, that secrecy, the falsehood with regard to your name, I could not forget your evident treachery, your lack of affection and your infidelity. Did you not desert me, and leave me a prey to despair and sorrow? You let me await your return from day to day; you did not come; even your letters, my last and only consolation, finally ceased, so that even my perfect trust in you was shaken. Do I need any other proof of your guilt, of your betrayal of my love?"

"And yet you are mistaken," said the prince, without losing his self-control, at that direct accusation. "I love you still, as in the first days of our secret happiness. Only the most important reasons could have made me desert you; but there remained no other alternative, to save you and me. Would I have willingly deprived myself of the sight of you, have left you for so long a time, have left your letters, your entreaties to return so long unanswered, have laid myself open to such painful suspicion, if your and my life's happiness had not been in the balance? Yes, I did it all with a bleeding heart, because only in that

way could I turn from us the threatening danger, could I protect you from the persecutions of my family, could I mislead our enemies."

Livia, although his words seemed improbable, influenced by the power of her old, unextinguished love, again believed his words.

"You speak of dangers," said she, in a softer voice, "which threaten us. Let me know what you fear, and you will find me ready for any sacrifice."

"Oh," he replied sadly, "I do not fear for myself, although the avowal of our secret would deprive me of the king's favor, of my position, and of all my prospects of a brilliant future. But your fate concerns me far more, poor Livia. The inevitable consequences of one single act of folly will make you and me miserable forever."

"Conceal nothing from me!" she besought, trembling not for herself, but for her beloved. "I must know the entire truth."

"How gladly," he replied, hesitatingly, "would I have spared you this new sorrow, would I have borne the burden alone, but you force me to tell you what I have kept from you for so long, that I would rather have kept from you forever."

"Oh! I am more courageous than you think, perhaps, when there is a question of your happiness."

"Well, by some unfortunate accident one of your letters fell into my mother's hands; it aroused her suspicions, and she had me watched. Surrounded by her spies, my every step dogged, nothing remained for me to do but to be prudent in order to protect you from such a discovery, for I learned that my mother was determined to separate us, to have our marriage declared void. This alone was the reason for my, to

you, inexplicable silence, for I feared to compromise you, to stake our happiness."

"What can your mother do? Am I not your lawful wife? Was not our union sealed by the priest's lips? Were she to try she would not succeed in breaking the sacred bond which unites us forever."

"Alas," replied the prince with a sigh, "her threat is not unfounded, for an old, unjust law maintains that the union of a man of my rank with a *bourgeoise* can be attacked."

"You lie!" cried Livia, again seized with mistrust. "No law upon earth can maintain that; no nation upon earth would allow its wives and daughters to be dishonored, deceived, and led astray by such a law. Would not every father blush, every man oppose it? You are only maligning divine justice in order to screen your infidelity, your treachery."

"Calm yourself!" said the prince, terrified at her violence. "The law exists, and if you will not believe me, you will at least believe your eyes. I will fetch the volume so that you may be convinced that I am not deceiving you."

"Remain!" said she gloomily. "I believe you, and know now what I have to expect of you."

"No, no!" cried the prince with real feeling. "You are unjust to me, if you doubt me and my heart, if you consider me capable of such a shameless act. But does our love require public avowal, legal acclamation? What care we for the world's opinion, if we know that we belong to one another forever? Does marriage bind any closer than the arm of the beloved? Are the priest's words worth more than my oath, and would you be happier and more contented to bear my name publicly? Were you an ordinary woman, I could

understand your suspicions; but you are a woman far above the prejudices of the generality of people, free and bold, as the eagle in the air, strong enough to break through those bonds, to scorn those miserable formalities."

Once more did the prince's wonderful eloquence calm Livia's doubts.

Even his relations with the Duchess von Taland, of the nature of which she could scarcely doubt since that evening at the Academy, he excused by his peculiar position, by representing to her the necessity of assuring his future by the influence of a woman in so high a rank, and above all to mislead his proud mother.

"You now see," said he, with his most fascinating smile," that I did not deceive you, but only worked for your interest. Trust me farther and I shall surely succeed, in time, in overcoming all these obstacles. But we need patience, and above all, the greatest prudence. You must live more secluded than ever in order to awaken no suspicion. I will watch over you until the longed-for moment shall come, when I can acknowledge you as my wife and accord you the position which your intellect and beauty merit. Are you satisfied?"

"I will believe you, but woe to you and me if you are deceiving me!"

## VIII

### HANDSOME HENRY'S PERPLEXITIES

In a measure satisfied, Livia left the prince, who thought he had calmed the threatening storm. Notwithstanding, the unexpected meeting had agitated him more than he would have liked to tell, and left him uneasy.

Charmed by Livia's beauty and intellect, piqued by her resistance, which he seldom met with in women, he had been led into a step which he really regretted.

He believed neither in the innocence nor virtue of a woman, so that he looked upon any means as permissible. Under the influence of such opinions he had persuaded Livia to that secret marriage, of the illegality of which he was aware.

He thought he had nothing to fear from her, on account of her scorn of all etiquette, and his fears for the possible results were calmed so much the easier.

When he found out his mistake, it was too late, although there were times when he rued his venturesome step, and really thought of defying all the prejudices of his family and of his associates, and of making Livia his lawful wife.

But those nobler sentiments speedily disappeared, for the prince had not the courage nor the moral strength to make such a sacrifice.

However, he had important reasons for appeasing Livia, and for not having an open rupture with her.

Before all, it was essential that he should obtain certain papers which were in her hands, and which could easily compromise him.

No one, in his opinion, could serve his purpose better than handsome Henry, the confidant of his adventure, who, on more than one occasion, had proved himself to be efficient.

After some consideration, the prince touched the silver bell, whereupon the servant appeared, not yet wholly recovered from his first fright.

"Henry," said the prince, "you know the lady who just left me?"

"I have that honor," replied the lackey.

"Good! Then I need not tell you that her unexpected appearance has disconcerted me considerably, and cannot fail to impress you."

"Certainly not, your highness!" replied handsome Henry, with a peculiar wink. "I cannot think of the affair without shuddering. Fortunately, though, I think the lady did not recognize me in the ante-chamber."

"So much the better; then you have nothing to fear. Notwithstanding, we must be very prudent. You will, therefore, do well not to lose sight of the lady, and to keep posted as to her every movement. I wish to know with what persons she associates, what persons she receives, and what sources of help are at hand for her."

"Your highness may depend entirely upon me, although I will not conceal the fact that such an undertaking is not agreeable to me."

"I know that you are a shrewd man, whom I can trust with the most important missions."

"Ah! you are too kind," replied the flattered lackey. "We are not so easily caught."

"For that very reason I have turned to you with the request that, besides the required news, you will obtain the wished-for letters for me, which I wrote to the lady some time ago."

"That will be difficult, and might, were I to be discovered, bring me into unpleasant relations with the law."

"I will protect you; my influence is sufficient to guard you from persecution; but it will hardly come to that, for you have already done more skillful things. This time, too, I reckon upon your talent and your discretion. For every letter I will pay an extra louis d'or."

"I will do all that lies in my power. At the latest, in a week I hope to obtain for your highness the letters and the marriage certificate."

"I did not commission you to do that," returned the prince, with a slight blush at the thought that the servant had guessed his secret wishes, which he feared to express.

"But it does not matter if I bring it along?"

The prince's silence upon that delicate point was, to handsome Henry, a sign of consent.

The knavish servant trusted to his luck, as well as to his experience in such matters, to obtain the papers, for he knew that he would be compromised by them as well as his master.

No means seemed, therefore, wrong to handsome Henry, for his own safety was at stake. But he must go to work with the greatest prudence in order not to expose himself to a dangerous discovery.

With that object he exchanged his gorgeous livery for the blouse of an ordinary laborer, whose manners he tried to imitate.

In that dress he not only succeeded in watching Livia unnoticed, but, too, in approaching the maid who waited upon her, with whom it was no difficult matter for him to form a tender connection.

When he had obtained what information he required he did not doubt but that with the aid of a double key he could open the secretary in which Livia, as he knew, kept her valuable papers.

Like a bird of prey, handsome Henry hovered night after night about the house, awaiting a favorable moment for the fulfillment of his plans, which was no easy matter, for both ladies seldom left their room.

Still he did not lose patience, and waited until finally Livia went out with her companion to take her usual walk. At once he took advantage of the twilight to enter the empty room unperceived, provided with the requisite instruments with which to open the writing-desk.

But unexpectedly he came upon greater hindrances than he had foreseen, for the drawer resisted his efforts, and the double key, which he had obtained from a wax impression, would not fit.

Therefore, nothing remained for him but to open the lock forcibly, which took more time than was to be spared. In the midst of his work he heard footsteps, which announced the approach of the ladies.

In order not to be surprised by them, nothing remained to be done but to leap through the opened window into the garden near by.

Fortunately, as he knew, an old pear tree was not far off, and offered an excellent hiding-place. Without any premeditation, handsome Henry seized a bough and swung himself into the tree.

But he was mistaken in his calculations, for the old

gardener and steward of the house for some time had feared for its safety, several burglaries having been committed in the neighborhood.

Armed with a rifle, every night before going to bed he went the rounds of his garden, accompanied by his watch-dog, which, scenting Henry's vicinity, suddenly paused under the pear tree and attracted the attention of the gardener by his loud barking.

"Who is there?" cried he, expecting a thief.

Naturally handsome Henry did not reply, while the gardener cocked his rifle. "Answer, or I will shoot!" That threat sufficed to frighten the unfortunate to such a degree that he almost fell from the tree. However, he possessed sufficient presence of mind to choose the lesser of two evils. He preferred braving the danger of being recognized by Livia to being shot or to falling into the hands of the brutal gardener or his dog.

With a bold resolution and a still bolder leap, he swung himself through the open window again into the room in which were the two ladies. At the unexpected sight of a strange man, Johanna screamed, while Livia bravely advanced towards him.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" she asked.

"For heaven's sake, save me!" besought handsome Henry. "If you do not hide me, I am lost!"

"First I must know if you are deserving of my protection."

"Oh! I am quite innocent," he replied. "Only a love affair with the housemaid brought me here. You can ask her if I am not speaking the truth. The steward wanted to shoot me because he took me, in the darkness, for a thief. I am an honest man, and worthy of your pity, you can believe me."

The more Livia heard and saw the fugitive, the more familiar did his features and his voice seem to her; the more suspicious seemed to her that man whom she thought she had already seen under quite different circumstances and among other surroundings.

In order to assure herself, she approached him with the lamp in her hand, for, either from modesty or prudence, he stood in the darkest corner of the room. The bright light which fell upon handsome Henry was not at all pleasant to him; he covered his face with both hands as if he wished to shut it out.

"Why do you hide your face from me?" asked Livia mistrustfully. "If you have a clear conscience, you need not fear to look at me."

"I do not like the light," he stammered in confusion.

"Take your hands away!" she commanded, in a manner which would admit of no resistance.

With a sigh, the lackey complied. In secret he cursed the fate which had thrown him into the hands of the woman whom he had the greatest occasion to avoid; he cursed his ill-luck, and his master, the Prince von Schwarzfels, most of all, to whom alone he owed the entire mishap.

His former impertinence had disappeared and had given place to cowardice, so that his entire body trembled, when, to his despair, he heard the voice of the gardener, who still was in search of the thief, and who knocked, in order to search the ladies' rooms.

"Grace! Mercy!" groaned the guilty lackey. "Do not make me miserable, madame!"

"Only on one condition will I spare you," replied Livia; "that is, if you tell me the truth, and do not conceal the slightest thing from me. I want to know who sent you here."

"His highness, Prince von Schwarzfels, whose servant I am."

"With what object did you steal into my room?"

"His highness wished to have certain papers again which are in madame's possession."

"Betrayed! shamefully betrayed!" murmured Livia.

"Calm yourself!" said the anxious friend. "The word of such a person cannot be very reliable."

"Alas! I know that he is speaking the truth. But that is not all," she continued, turning to handsome Henry. "If I am not mistaken, I have seen you before, though in another dress. You probably remember what role you played?"

"I really do not understand what role madame means," stammered handsome Henry, in the greatest confusion, as his face colored, and large drops of perspiration stood upon his brow.

"Shall I assist your memory?" asked Livia.

"No, no!" cried the terrified servant. "You need not trouble yourself. I will hide nothing from you. But remember, madame, that I am only a poor serving-man who must obey his master's orders. You may believe me, and I swear it, that I hesitated long enough before I allowed his highness to persuade me to take part in that farce; but you know yourself how he influences everyone. He represented the whole affair to me so innocent, as such a jest, that I finally believed him and allowed myself to be led."

Each of his words was to Livia as the stroke of a dagger; but she did not desist until she had obtained the whole truth from the traitor.

Only when she could no longer doubt the prince's guilt did she free handsome Henry; but not before she had commanded him not to tell the prince of the in-

formation he had given her, which naturally was no difficult matter for him, as his personal interests were concerned.

That night, as a result of the excitement, Livia was taken ill, and for several days hovered between life and death, from which she was saved by the care of Dr. Eichler and the nursing of her aunt, who did not leave her bedside day or night.

## IX

### A NEW LIFE

When Livia rose from her sick-bed, she seemed to herself entirely changed; her ideals were destroyed, her illusions had disappeared, and of all her dreams nothing remained but the remembrance of her innocent shame.

"I fear I shall become insane," moaned the unhappy woman.

"You must try to forget him," advised the anxious Johanna.

"That is not possible. I cannot banish the terrible affair from my memory. I cannot forget how he has deceived me. Only the hope of revenging myself has kept me alive. Now I know that hatred is more powerful than love."

"What can you do against the prince?"

"Have I not the proofs of his guilt in my hands?"

"They will be of no use. Remember, the prince defies even the law, on account of his position. At a pinch he would turn to the king for aid. But even if your secret marriage were legal, I think that its legality might be assailed, as you are not his equal in birth."

"I shall at least brand him by such an accusation, so that the finger of scorn will be pointed at him, and respectable men will refuse him their recognition."

"Poor Livia," replied her aunt, sadly. "You do not know the world; still less the one in which the prince

moves. Its opinion depends principally on success, position, and wealth. Woe to the poor, and especially to the defenseless woman! Nothing remains for you but to bear your fate in silence, you would be vanquished in the unequal struggle, and injure yourself alone."

"No, no!" replied Livia. "There is justice higher than earthly law. The measure is overflowing; the injury cries to heaven. The day will come when I shall be revenged upon the traitor."

To such outbursts of passionate grief followed an unnatural calmness, a silent brooding over desperate resolutions and wild plans, which almost bordered on madness. Fortunately, however, Livia found a healing balsam for her wounds in her own talent. As a result of her mood, she wrote that poetical work which she produced after her convalescence.

Her own lot afforded her material for an excellent tragedy, in which she depicted with boldness and passionate warmth all the sorrows, all the tortures of a woman's heart.

It was the first act of her vengeance.

The feelings with which she was possessed made her more ready to receive Steiner's suit, which at first she had rejected so decidedly. Since the day on which he had expressed his opinion so clearly of Prince von Schwarzfels in her presence, she thought she had found in him an ally and a tool for her revenge.

All those reasons prompted Livia to listen more readily to his wishes. Her grief was too fresh, her heart too recently disturbed, to return his love; but she at least accepted his attentions, and was still too much a woman not to feel flattered by the passionate adoration of such a man.

More than once was she tempted to confide in Steiner the secret of her life, but she refrained from doing so, fearing by such a confession to lose his esteem. She did not wish to deceive the honorable man, to abuse his implicit faith; but fear of lowering herself in his opinion led her into untruths and a falseness foreign to her nature.

So she became constantly more deeply involved in the net which in vain she tried to break, though she felt that the ground was trembling beneath her feet.

"You must," said her aunt, try to put an end to this indecision. Steiner offers you his hand and he alone can raise you from your false position."

"I am not yet perfectly certain," returned Livia, "that the prince is not playing me a trick, that my marriage is not valid."

"You can no longer doubt it since his confidential servant has made such a confession to you. You yourself recognized in him the false divine who married you. You have been the object of a knavish trick which is unequaled."

"And yet I cannot believe. I have, therefore, written to the prince."

"To this day you have received no reply. His silence is the best proof of his guilt."

"You know that he was away for some time."

"But he has returned; notwithstanding, he has not taken the least notice of your letters, because he fears to commit himself. At the same time he counts upon your discretion, or, rather, your fear of the publicity of such a scandal, which would fall partly upon you."

"So much the less can I listen to Steiner, for I will not deceive the honorable man. From what I know of him, he would never forgive me such deception. I should not outlive such disgrace."

"Such a thing could not happen, for all the participants, and especially the prince, are interested in keeping the affair quiet. In that direction you have nothing to fear. You are in no way bound, for you were never really married."

"Yet a secret voice warns me against such a step."

"You are entirely innocent. Should you, therefore, refuse all future happiness, the hand of a man who seems made for you?"

If her aunt did not entirely succeed in convincing Livia, the latter was at least disposed to listen to Steiner's wishes, and inspired him, therefore, with the most joyful hopes.

Yet he was not sure of his happiness, for she hesitated from day to day to speak the decisive word, as she still expected news from the prince.

In the meantime the political situation had changed and the young scholar had become over-night one of the most influential party-leaders, without any especial effort on his part.

At the assembly of the new parliament, Steiner was elected by a large majority, and became at once the hero and defender of the people.

These new developments influenced Livia. She saw in Steiner the prince's opponent—the one, the inspired leader of the democracy, the other, the haughty, overbearing aristocrat. Another life seemed to open out before her, her entire past was only a dream.

The breath of spring seemed to have passed over the land. The streets and houses were decorated with the standards and colors of freedom, everywhere were to be met happy men who rejoiced in the victory won, and who shook hands in brotherly love.

Livia could no longer withstand that influence.

Flattered by the love of such an honored man, urged by her friend, she gave Steiner her hand, she became his wife.

# BOOK IV

# I

## PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLES

A new era had dawned; from all corners of the fatherland came the representatives of the people, in order to realize the dream of unity and to help found the building of freedom for future times.

Into the midst of that assembly of men of all ranks and stations, came Steiner. He was inspired by the share of the mission which had fallen to him.

With him appeared Dr. Bergemann, that keen sophist, and Prince von Schwarzfels, so that the representatives of the most diverse parties were reunited.

The various associates formed into groups with their leaders. Anarchism and republicanism, feudal rule and governmental rights were the topics of the day.

Here was assembled the conservative element around Prince von Schwarzfels, defending their old-time privileges with all the weapons at their command. There could be heard Doctor Bergemann's voice threatening society, while he flattered the passions of the crowd.

Between those extremes came Steiner, with his political followers, advocating the necessity of a radical change, both with regard to the defenders of the feudal system and the leaders of republicanism, and keeping, above all, before their eyes, the weal and the unity of the fatherland.

His eloquence, his reputation, and his tried character,

soon obtained such an ascendancy over the assembly that even his opponents were forced to acknowledge his great talent, and to respect his independent views.

Even Dr. Bergemann offered his former friend and ally his hand, which the latter did not refuse to touch.

Without the assembly, too, their intercourse was friendly, for Livia was interested in the intellectual doctor and wished to make his acquaintance. She even took more interest than ever in political matters, and on important debates never failed to appear in the gallery. On that particular day when the doctor inveighed against the rights of the nobles, the gallery was filled with spectators.

Among the most prominent were to be seen the Duchess von Taland, Baron von Gallen, with his romantic wife, the poetical counselor of the embassy, and Count Harrer.

"What do you say to such insolence?" asked the vice-president of the Jockey Club. "These people wish to do away with the nobility. How absurd! Nobility is as old as the world, and will stand as long as the world stands. Is not that your opinion?"

Then followed a debate in the gallery, which was interrupted by the president's bell, which gave the sign for the anxiously-waited transactions.

Upon the rostrum appeared Dr. Bergemann, in order deliver his oration on the abolishment of the aristocratic privileges.

Before he began, he involuntarily glanced toward the gallery where Livia sat, and by her eyes and her smile seemed to inspire and spur on the debaters. She followed anxiously the struggle which would result, she hoped, in the defeat of the Prince von Schwarzfels and the Duchess von Taland, who would suffer the most.

When the doctor had concluded and the tumult had in a measure subsided, the prince, as defender of the cause, ascended the rostrum.

His full, sonorous voice, his gestures, and his fine declamation, announced the master of elocution, although they lent him a theatrical air. He spoke with energy and ease against the subject in hand, from his romantic, feudal standpoint. At the same time he did not fail to place himself in his best light. Incidentally he touched upon his acquaintance, or intimacy, with the first statesmen of England and France, or with the literary and scientific lights of the day.

The prince celebrated, indeed, a fresh triumph, and was interrupted more than once by loud applause from his party. From time to time he paused to note the effect of his eloquence, and frequently glanced toward the gallery.

Suddenly he stopped in the midst of his eloquence, just at the moment when he thought he had gained a victory over his opponents. His voice faltered, his confident manner disappeared, and he left the so artistically-begun sentence unfinished.

No one but Livia suspected the cause of that unexpected interruption. The mere sight of her had sufficed to rob him of his self-possession, and to turn the assured triumph into a complete defeat. In vain did he try to forget what he had seen. Her eyes followed him wherever he turned, and involuntarily, as if impelled by an invisible power, he glanced at her again. Still she sat there, her pale, beautiful face with its familiar features, turned toward him, her dark, glowing eyes fastened severely upon him.

The consciousness of his guilt, the surprising meeting, paralyzed his powers to such an extent that the

prince broke off his speech amidst a general murmur, and, pleading sudden indisposition, he left the platform.

## II

### THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

After that memorable meeting the two parties were more bitterly opposed than ever. The salon of the Duchess von Taland became the meeting-place of the aristocracy, which, at any price, sought to win back its lost influence. There, Prince von Schwarzfels developed a plan, with the help of his friend, the duchess, for a dangerous reaction.

"As I hear," said the prince, "in a few days a national assembly is to be held; with the aid of several paid brawlers a disturbance can easily be created, and will furnish us with an opportunity of calling out the soldiers."

'Will you stand the responsibility?" asked loyal Count Harrer. "I hate all such underhand doings, although I am ready to meet our enemies in open combat. As soon as my king calls I will do my duty."

"Why all this dallying?" asked the vice-president of the Jockey Club. "All those rascally dogs should be shot down without further delay. That is my advice, and until it is done we shall have no peace."

"Do you know," said the duchess, "that there is talk of a new revolutionary ministry to be formed of the most prominent members of parliament? Among them they mention Dr. Steiner as a candidate."

"Dr. Steiner!" cried the prince, with evident perplexity. "It is impossible."

"There are at present no impossibilities. The doctor's wife," said Baroness von Gallen, "already fancies herself 'excellence,' if not wife of the president of the new Republic. Your highness no doubt knows the lady."

"I?" asked the prince, in confusion. "How should I know her?"

"They say she is very pretty and intelligent," said the counselor of the legation.

"A blue-stocking," replied the duchess, with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders. "An adventuress who, they say, is a poor imitation of Mme. Roland. We will not grudge her and her husband their short-lived pleasure, for the parliamentary farce will soon be at an end."

While about the Duchess von Taland assembled the feudal elements of society, about Livia assembled the democratic party-leaders, attracted as much by her beauty and intellect as by Steiner's influential position.

Livia herself entered earnestly into the political situation. Actuated by a thirst for vengeance against the prince, she at the same time found gratification for her ambition.

She tried to imitate the celebrated women and heroines of the first French revolution, and above all Mme. Roland.

With that view she strove to attach to her the most prominent members of parliament, and especially Dr. Bergemann, as he, after her husband, was the most capable man in the assembly.

To him freedom was a matter of indifference. His ideals were to be found in anarchy, in the complete dissolution of society. Fatherland, family, estates, faith, were chimeras to him.

As he stood almost alone in parliament, by virtue of his opinions, and his influence was limited there, he sought to win, without the assembly, his lost ground by influencing the excited people by means of his eloquence and his socialistic tendencies.

The sly demagogue took care to expose himself as little as possible, and did his work through others, he holding the threads, and guiding his puppets at his will.

His teachings had already borne fruit.

Prince von Schwarzfels, too, nourished the discontent of the masses by sending his secret agents among them in order to bring about his ends.

Handsome Henry, who was still in his service, often mingled in disguise with the people, and scattered, broadcast, money which flowed from the coffers of the Duchess von Taland.

Government in the meantime waited calmly, and allowed the revolution to discredit itself, while it quietly prepared its plans.

So much the more busy was the secret reaction. The speakers were mostly well-known personages from the cultured classes, with here and there a laboring-man, or one of the people.

Usually the hastily-improvised platform, around which the crowd pressed, stood in the open air. Here the topics of the day were discussed, decisions made, petitions started, and carried out by the easily-excited mob.

The clubs and assemblies so constituted were often visited by Livia in the company of Dr. Bergemann, for she showed a preference for such exciting scenes, while her husband avoided them as much as possible, without, however, opposing or restricting his wife's inclinations in any way.

Steiner respected his wife's individuality and excused her extreme views with her poetical nature, so that he raised no objections either to her conduct or to her familiarity with Dr. Bergemann, with whom he had so many interests in common.

As long as Livia was with Steiner the evil demons of hatred and revenge seemed to leave her, and she seemed raised above all the temptations and trials of the world. She now hovered in the highest regions of the world of thought, now yielded to the wildest suggestions of her strained fancy. The harmonious equilibrium of the mind was lacking. So much the more charming did she seem in those moments when she exercised a magical power by the might and fullness of her genius and caused all her weaknesses to be forgotten.

At such moments there was no man who could have resisted her, and even Steiner experienced a feeling of inexpressible bliss in the possession of a wife who united, with the greatest beauty, all the gifts of genius, the highest inspiration.

## III

### A MODERN TRIBUNE OF THE PEOPLE

Since the early days of his acquaintance with Livia, Dr. Bergemann was possessed with a glowing passion for the wife of his former friend. Only on her account had he renewed their early ties and simulated a friendship which his heart did not feel. He envied doubly his fortunate rival, both for his political influence and his possession of such a wife. To snatch both from him, was his only wish.

With that aim he sought to gain Livia's confidence, to learn her character, her weaknesses. She was his study by day and night, a problem which he would solve at any price.

A thoughtless word, a casual remark, a gesture, a smile, sufficed for him, formed a link in the chain of evidence which daily brought him nearer the truth.

Soon he perceived that Livia had a secret from the world, and especially from her husband, and that by possessing it he could attain his object.

He became her escort to all the clubs, assemblies, and public demonstrations.

On one of those occasions, at a certain hour, a meeting of all democratic elements was to take place, at his instigation, in order to send a petition to parliament with regard to the unsatisfactory conditon of politics. The assembly was composed principally of the lower classes. Bergemann, too, was present, ap-

parently as an interested spectator and Livia's escort, while he was in reality the leader and soul of the movement.

Here and there he exchanged a significant glance with his confidential agents, or uttered to some laboring man a few friendly or indifferent words, behind which was hidden a secret meaning.

One man who addressed the meeting, toward its close, seemed to electrify the audience. He was about forty years of age, and his pale, emaciated face bespoke years of suffering and bitterness. His long, gray hair, and tangled beard, which reached almost to his waist, gave him a wild appearance. In his blue, deep-set eyes, lurked a strange glow, an immeasurable fanaticism.

His words were not clothed in obscureness, but were words of conviction.

Clearly he depicted the political situation, the position of the parties, the incapability of parliament. In cutting phrases he denounced the cowardly citizens' actions, mocked at the weakness and inactivity of the so-called "Liberals," and declared himself for the socialistic republic. No orator before him had spoken so sharply and energetically, had expressed with such reckless fanaticism his communistic tendencies.

"Who is that man?" asked Bergemann of his neighbor, during a pause.

No one seemed to know him, only Livia fancied she had seen him before, and was reminded through him of her former teacher, Römisch.

Inspired by the desire to see her old, and as it seemed to her, needy friend again, she told Dr. Bergemann of her suspicions and asked him to seek out the orator, who had already disappeared in the throng. It

was no easy matter to find him, and in his search Dr. Bergemann came near being separated from his companion.

The excitement during that last speech had reached its highest pitch, and it only required the slightest occasion for a conflict, an outbreak, not at all uncommon at such times; a word, a suspicious movement would be sufficient under the circumstances.

"Catch the spy!" suddenly cried a voice in the throng.

"A spy? Where is he? Kill him! Hang him!" resounded from all sides.

Then followed terrible confusion. Chased by the angry mob, the sacrifice pointed out, handsome Henry, rushed by with a pale face and distorted features, like hunted game. Prince von Schwarzfels' sly servant had, at his master's wish, attended the meeting, and had, in spite of his disguise, been suspected of being a "red." Recognized as a tool of the reaction, he was in the greatest danger of being ill-treated, or even killed by the enraged people.

A hundred brawny arms were outstretched to seize him, or strike him down, when, glancing around in search of help, he saw Livia near by.

'Save me, gracious madame!" cried the unfortunate man, falling at her feet.

"Kill the dog! Down with the traitor!"

"For heaven's sake," implored the man, "help me once more, as you did before. I will be eternally grateful to you. You know that I am familiar with all the prince's secrets, and can tell you about him. You shall learn all, if you will only protect me this time."

With amazement Dr. Bergemann heard Henry's

peculiar supplication, which betrayed intimacy with Livia, and promised him the solution of the long-sought-for secret. While she hesitated, the agitator spoke a few words to the mob.

"I believe," said he, with a peculiar glance at Livia, "that this lady, the wife of the famous Steiner, knows the man, and will vouch for his innocence."

"Indeed," stammered Livia, " I know him."

"No, no!" cried an obstinate fellow. "The man is a spy, Prince von Schwarzfels' servant."

The very name of the hated aristocrat sufficed to fan the flame.

Even the presence of the well-known Bergemann could not have protected Henry, and he would surely have been lost if Livia had not at that moment espied the face of the school candidate and favorite orator among the followers. Through the confusion she succeeded in making herself known to him, and claiming his protection for the man.

"Let the fellow go," said he. "He is only his master's tool."

"Bravo!" cried the mob. "Down with the prince! Let the fellow go!"

While the majority ere satisfied, there were a few who did not wish to let Henry escape without making an example of him.

"Back!" commanded the fanatic. "Would you stain your hands with this miserable man's blood? He is only a poor slave, who must obey his master. Instead of killing, we will free him. He is not to blame, but his master; and we must bring him to justice."

"The sooner the better!" cried the mob wildly.

In order to draw him from the gaze of his persecutors, the leader of the people offered handsome Henry

his hand, and led him, followed by Livia and Dr. Bergemann, out of the menacing throng into the open air.

While Livia was greeting her old friend and teacher, and listened to his recital of his wanderings, Dr. Bergemann found an opportunity to ask a few apparently innocent questions of Henry with regard to Livia's relations to him, or, rather, to Prince von Schwarzfels.

Although the sly fellow was careful not to tell him the whole truth in order not to compromise himself, his replies gave Dr. Bergemann the principal points of the secret. What was still obscure he hoped to clear up, with Henry's aid, and the galvanic charm of a few gold pieces.

The unexpected appearance, too, of the fanatic, was for many reasons welcome to Bergemann, who saw in him a useful ally for his secret plans and purposes. Livia's friend and teacher, the popular orator who exercised such power over the minds and actions of the multitude, was a tool not to be despised in the hands of so skilful an agitator.

With the help of both, Bergemann hoped to attain his object; to win Livia's love, and to undermine Steiner's political position.

## IV

### ARISTOCRATIC STRATAGEMS

By such proceedings the minds of the people were daily more inflamed, and a struggle between the parties seemed inevitable.

At first the mob contented itself with receiving this or that deputation on its way to parliament, now with loud acclamations, now with derisive hissing and hooting. They hesitated to perform acts of violence.

Only the fanatic, Römisch, was not frightened by the danger and its possible results, for he loudly and openly egged on the men.

They forced their way into the halls and corridors of the assembly-rooms; the majority of the members rose from their seats, but the president, who alone retained his self-possession, bade them to be seated. In the meantime, the doors of the House were bolted to keep out intruders. They beat upon the doors until they almost yielded, and through the gap could be seen their angry faces. Soon the pressure upon it forced it open, and the foremost in the mob entered, ready to dare the worst.

Suddenly Steiner rose and met the madmen on the threshold at the risk of being maltreated.

"What do you want here?" he cried. "In the sacred spot upon which rests the majesty of the people?"

"We wish to bring our enemies to justice," replied the fanatical leader, "to cleanse the assembly of the

impure elements which betray freedom, and wish to subject and oppress the people."

"You need not seek the traitors here," replied Steiner. "We are simply the mirror of the people, in which they see their own image. You attack yourselves if you attack a member of this assembly. We are one for all, all for one."

Such a speech did not fail in its effect, coming from the mouth of such a man.

The danger, if not entirely done away with, was at least lessened. In the meantime the officers without had succeeded in clearing the galleries and corridors. With fury Bergemann saw his plans for the time-being frustrated, but he did not give up the hope of attaining his object.

Prince von Schwarzfels, although universally detested, was in no way satisfied. His vanity was wounded at the thought that Steiner would be the hero of the day.

So within, as well as without the assembly, the lighted brand was not extinguished, but smoldered in secret.

Prince von Schwarzfels was eager to profit by the offered opportunity and to suppress the revolution with one bold stroke, and to destroy the hated people's party. More than ever did he urge Count Harrer, who had command of the troops, to act energetically, and to meet the mob weapons in hand.

"Now or never," said he eagerly, "the moment has come. In your hand lies the salvation of the monarchy, the restoration of the threatened nobility. One bold resolve, and we overthrow the revolution."

"I certainly detest the revolution as much as you do—nor do I fear danger in order to serve my king.

But unfortunately I have not, at the present moment, sufficient troops with which to undertake a struggle with the people."

"It would not be difficult to obtain reinforcements from the nearest fortress. Telegraph to the commandant and ask him for aid, above all for a few cannon. In two or three hours two battalions with the necessary artillery can be here, and then victory will be ours."

The prince allayed all the loyal count's fears with his eloquence, and the latter finally agreed to ask for support.

With that news the prince repaired to the Duchess von Taland's, where he was impatiently awaited and where he was received as the savior of society, as the brave antagonist of the revolution.

"Two hours," said the prince, looking at his watch, "and the victory will be ours."

"And his Highness, von Schwarzfels, will be our premier. Long live the future Richelieu!"

As the prince received compliments and flattery in the duchess' salon, in the streets of the town reigned that sultriness which usually precedes a storm. Like black clouds the revolutionary party gathered together.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost, for their numbers increased constantly, and their barricades grew higher and higher.

The gay aristocrats in the duchess' salon were gradually rendered ill at ease by the gravity of the situation and the delay of the troops.

The commandant had announced the departure of the troops, but the time for their arrival glided by and no sign had been given.

"If," said the prince, softly, to the duchess, as they

stood by an open window, "the troops do not soon arrive, we are lost."

"I depend upon Count Harrer's bravery. He will not yield, and would rather die than retreat a step."

"He would simply sacrifice himself uselessly, without saving us. I can stand this no longer."

"What shall you do?"

"I shall go to meet the troops, and try to hasten their arrival personally."

"You dare not risk such danger. How easily might you be recognized by the mob and killed."

"Do not fear. My noble steed is as swift as the wind, and knows that he bears Cæsar and his fortune. You shall see me soon again at the head of our troops."

"Under no circumstances will I suffer you to go alone."

"Baron von Gallen can accompany me if he wishes to share the danger."

The duchess tried to dissuade the prince from his purpose, but he scoffed lightly at her fears.

"He who wishes to win all, must risk all. The world belongs to the brave."

"You are wrong to be so daring, for you know you have innumerable enemies, and that the people are incensed against you."

"The more enemies, the more honor," he replied, gayly. "The hatred of the mob is a matter of indifference to me, for I despise it."

Victoriously he left the room, accompanied by Baron von Gallen.

## V

### PRINCE VON SCHWARZFELS' DEATH

While the two horsemen reached the nearest gateway unmolested and struck out upon the highroad, handsome Henry slipped unseen to Dr. Bergemann's house. The prince's servant was at the same time the agitator's spy.

The traitor was doubly welcome to Dr. Bergemann, for he obtained from him the wished-for solution of Livia's secret, as well as news of the prince.

"What is it?" he asked his spy.

"News of the greatest importance, doctor."

"Let me hear it! As you see, I am in a hurry, and can only spare you a few moments."

"They intend bringing fresh troops into the town; two battalions with artillery are on the way, and may arrive at any moment."

"Is that all?"

"Until now the aristocrats have awaited reinforcements, but now my lord and Baron von Gallen have ridden to meet them."

"How long is it since the prince went?"

"Scarcely fifteen minutes. He took the road by the promenade, which he thinks safer."

After rewarding the treacherous servant and dismissing him, he left his house.

At the street corner, he beckoned to a suspicious-looking man, to whom he whispered several words,

whereupon the man disappeared in order to seek out the fanatical Römisch, who was at the head of an armed band. A few moments later, he and his men were on the way to the *chaussée*.

In the meantime the prince and his companion rode along, chatting freely—without the gate all seemed peaceful, and offered a strange contrast to the excitement within. Women sat at their doors with their needlework, men read, and children played upon the lawns.

On one balcony only stood a lovely woman, a cloud upon her brow. She alone, in the midst of those peaceful surroundings, was ill at ease.

It was Livia, who had anxiously awaited her husband. Instead she had received a few hastily penned lines, in which he told her of the events of the day, that she might not be uneasy at his absence.

She knew that the decisive moment had come, upon which depended the fate of the fatherland, her own fate, the triumph or the defeat of her political friends, and above all, of her husband.

Filled with that thought, she glanced toward the town. She heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and recognized the prince. At the same time she saw, from her vantage-point, a dark form hidden among the trees of the highway, and which seemed to be watching both horsemen.

A terrible suspicion possessed her. Hatred and love, fear and hope, good and evil spirits, struggled in her bosom at that fatal moment.

She could no longer remain upon the balcony; breathlessly she rushed into the street, without knowing what she did or what she wanted.

Unsuspectingly the prince and Baron von Gallen

rode along, without perceiving their danger, until a cry of rage from their pursuers startled them.

"We are betrayed," said the prince, turning pale. "We have been recognized and followed. But the enemy cannot reach us so easily. Spur on your horse, baron! Forward! Our lives are in the balance."

Torn by the most conflicting emotions, Livia reached Römisch's side; the latter gazed at her in surprise.

"Livia!" cried he. "What do you want here? This is no place for women."

"For God's sake!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing? Speak, Römisch, I beseech you, by our friendship, by all that is sacred to you."

"The people," said he gloomily, "have risen in order to punish the traitors, to destroy their enemies. He cannot escape us."

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of Prince von Schwarzfels, who is our strongest opponent. The fool wished to ruin us, but he is caught in his own toils. His blood be upon his head!"

"Shall you kill him?" cried Livia in so loud a voice that she startled even the fanatic.

"No mercy for the guilty. Down with the aristocrat, with the oppressor of freedom!"

"No, no! He shall not, he cannot die! I will and must save him, though he may have deserved death a thousand times," replied Livia, with sudden determination.

Her long-cherished resentment had vanished, and she felt only the deepest compassion for the guilty man.

The start which the two horsemen had in the meantime obtained, was growing less from minute to minute, and no time was to be lost. To throw the

pursuers off the track, the prince at a turn in the road, left the highway, and dashed into a garden-path between high hedge-trees, so that he really could not be seen by them.

Livia, who saw him disappear, breathed more freely, but she did not cease to implore her old teacher to call back his men.

"I cannot do that," replied the fanatic, "for the prince is bent upon our ruin; but he shall only serve us as an example, and I promise you that no harm shall befall him. Nor would my embittered people listen to me if I tried to detain them. But I will do all I can to prevent any act of violence."

Full of hope that her friend would keep his word, with an anxious and heavy heart she turned toward the villa, convinced that she had prevented the dreaded catastrophe.

The prince, fearing to be cut off by the armed mob, decided to leave the road, and to seek shelter in a house near by, from which he was separated by a high fence. Seeing that his horse could not leap it, he and the baron alighted, and, tearing down a post, forced an entrance.

"Save us!" cried the prince to the owner, who hastened up. "Hide us and we will richly reward you."

"Who are you?" asked the man, in astonishment.

"For God's sake, ask no questions, but help us," he besought.

In the distance could be heard the yells of the pursuers, who had found traces of horses' hoofs. But before they could reach the house, the owner had hidden the fugitives; the prince in the cellar, the baron on the ground-floor.

Scarcely were they concealed than the mob arrived

and demanded the surrender of the hated aristocrats. The owner of the house denying all knowledge of their whereabouts, they surrounded the house and searched it.

In his dark corner the prince could hear their imprecations, their every word.

A loud yell of triumph informed him that the baron had been discovered. The mob then descended to the cellar, which was divided into three sections, the last of which was filled with empty hogsheads and kegs, behind which the prince hid.

The owner of the house was forced to open the door. The cellar was only faintly lighted, as it was twilight, and the man succeeded in deceiving the rest into the belief that there were only two sections.

They left the cellar with a volley of oaths, and the prince breathed more freely. Taking the baron with them, they proceeded to the stable. The sight of two horses re-awakened their suspicions.

They returned to the house to search it once more. They repaired to the cellar and discovered the third compartment; they demanded the key to the door, which the owner claimed had been mislaid. Heedless of his protestations, they opened the door forcibly. But not a trace of the prince was to be seen. They were about to turn away again, when a young man, with red hair, perceived the end of his coat between the casks.

The sacrifice was found and dragged forth, in spite of his prayers, his promises.

In the meantime the remainder of the mob, under the leadership of Römisch, reached the house. With horrible yells the rabble demanded of him the instant death of both prisoners.

"They shall not escape punishment," said the fanatic, remembering his promise to Livia, "but I have a proposition to make to you."

This the mob objected to, and rushed upon the unfortunate men; but Römisch, accustomed to such scenes, would not allow himself to be so easily frightened, and protected with his own breast both of the prisoners.

"Back!" cried he, in a voice of thunder. "You know me and know that I am no traitor, that I hate this aristocrat as much and more than you do."

"That is true!" said a man near him. "Römisch is a thorough democrat, a friend of the people. We will listen to him. Hurrah for Römisch."

"No, no!" cried the hated prince's bitter enemies.

"Yes, yes!" cried Römisch's adherents. "Be still, peace!"

"I agree with you," said the fanatic, "that the man deserves death, and that the people will be right to condemn him."

"We will make short work of him," cried the red-haired fellow who had first discovered the prince, cocking his gun.

But the fanatic interrupted him, and proposed keeping the two men as hostages until they had gained the victory over their enemies.

Silently the prince followed his tormentors, for he had not given up all hope of being rescued from the hands of the revolutionary mob by the troops expected by him. Involuntarily he fancied he heard their tramp, he lagged behind.

"Forward!" commanded his guard, poking him in the side with his gun.

That was more than the prince could bear; his pride revolted; he raised his hand to push him back.

"Die, dog!" cried the bloodthirsty fellow, cocking his pistol.

The prince sought to wrest the weapon from him; in the struggle a shot was fired and the prisoner fell wounded to the ground, together with Baron von Gallen, whom a second bullet had killed instantaneously. Laughing scornfully, the inhuman beings proceeded on their way, and left the dying man lying on the road where the school candidate, who had just turned around, saw him.

Even the fanatic was touched with compassion at the sight of the tragical fate of the once so gay and haughty aristocrat as he lay with glazing eyes and set face in the light of the setting sun.

Then could be heard, as if in derision, the trumpets of the rescuers, and bayonets glittered in the sunlight.

Once more the wounded man raised himself, and a convulsive quiver passed over his pallid features.

"They come," he murmured, "too late."

A deep sigh, then deeper silence.

The prince was dead.

## VI

### THE SEPARATION

The news of the unexpected end of the unfortunate prince called forth the greatest surprise and horror, when, after the arrival of the troops, peace was restored. In the confusion the murderers and Römisch had succeeded in making their escape. Dr. Bergemann could not be punished, as all proofs against him were lacking, and no one dared accuse him.

Great was the duchess' grief at the loss of her friend, whom she mourned as a widow. The Baroness von Gallen, too, was inconsolable.

But Livia was more affected by that tragical end than anyone else. Only with difficulty could she conceal her emotion. She in secret accused herself of being his murderess.

She avoided meeting her husband's pure glance. At such moments she felt compelled to confess all to him, but fear of Steiner's severity restrained her. More than all was she rendered anxious by Bergemann's insulting conduct, for he made no secret of his passion. When she repulsed him with dignity, he hinted at a knowledge of her secret, or alluded to her past.

So she was forced to suffer his presence, to listen to his bold speeches. The more she saw of that socialist, the more she shuddered at the foulness of his character.

At the same time Steiner's nobility became clear to

her. Her esteem for him had with time grown to be deep, warm love. Only for a moment had Livia been dazzled by Bergemann; she speedily discovered her error. Her resistance only provoked still more the desires of the unscrupulous agitator, who hoped to gratify his passions through his knowledge of her secret. He persecuted Livia with his attentions.

One day, filled with indignation, she repulsed him with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, which only rendered her more desirable to the licentious man.

With demoniacal ardor he seized the charming woman, embraced her, covered her face and neck with ardent kisses. With an effort she disengaged herself from his clasp. He followed her as she fled before him to the nearest door. At that moment Steiner unexpectedly appeared upon the threshold, having returned from town. With a loud cry the frightened woman fell upon her astonished husband's breast.

"Save me, protect me," she cried, "from your shameless friend, from myself!"

"What has happened?" he asked.

"Ask your wife," replied Bergemann, with a scornful smile, for he did not think her courageous enough to confess her own disgrace.

"Livia, speak, keep nothing from me."

"Yes, I will speak," said she solemnly, "and confess all to you that I have hitherto concealed. You shall be my judge, condemn or acquit me, when you know all. Nothing shall any longer restrain me from telling you the truth."

"Oh!" cried Steiner, "you have deceived me, you love Bergemann!"

"Such suspicion is an insult," she replied, with a bitter smile. "I have not yet sunk so low, although a heavy guilt rests upon my conscience."

Bergemann, irritated by her contempt, said: "I am too insignificant an object for the gracious lady's love, much too insignificant, for that I should at least be an aristocrat like the Prince von Schwarzfels."

"Miserable fellow!" exclaimed Steiner. "Only our former friendship keeps me from punishing you as you deserve. I know only too well that you are a liar, a slanderer, who shrinks from no base act."

"Yet I have only spoken the truth."

"Livia! I beseech you, say that he has lied and I will believe you."

"I cannot," she moaned, burying her face in her hands. Deeply moved Steiner gazed at the unhappy woman, who read her fate in his eyes.

"Hear me first," she besought sadly, "before you condemn me. I only ask of you what the worst criminal can ask of his judge. But what I have to say to you allows of no other witnesses. Fear not that I will deceive you. To you alone do I owe justice; you alone shall hear the whole truth from my lips."

"Oh!" interpolated Bergemann, ironically, "I feel that I am *de trop* in this domestic scene, and will not intrude any longer."

A long pause ensued when Bergemann had left the room. Neither dared at once interrupt the painful silence, fearing the next moment which would determine their entire lives.

"We are alone," said Steiner, after a pause, with difficulty. "I am ready to hear your secret."

'It is only too true," said she, sadly. "I loved Prince von Schwarzfels before I knew you. I was his wife, or rather I thought I was."

"Impossible!" cried he. "You are mad or are trying to deceive me."

"I have," said she, sorrowfully, "merited your mistrust, but I swear to you by all that is sacred to me, that I was the object of a shameful piece of deception."

She related the story of her marriage and desertion. She informed him that she had all the proofs of the prince's guilt in her possession, and could show them to him.

"What kept you from unmasking the deceiver, from claiming your rights?"

"My pride and my weakness; my dread of publicity, my care for my reputation, my future, but above all my love."

"For the unworthy prince who deceived you?"

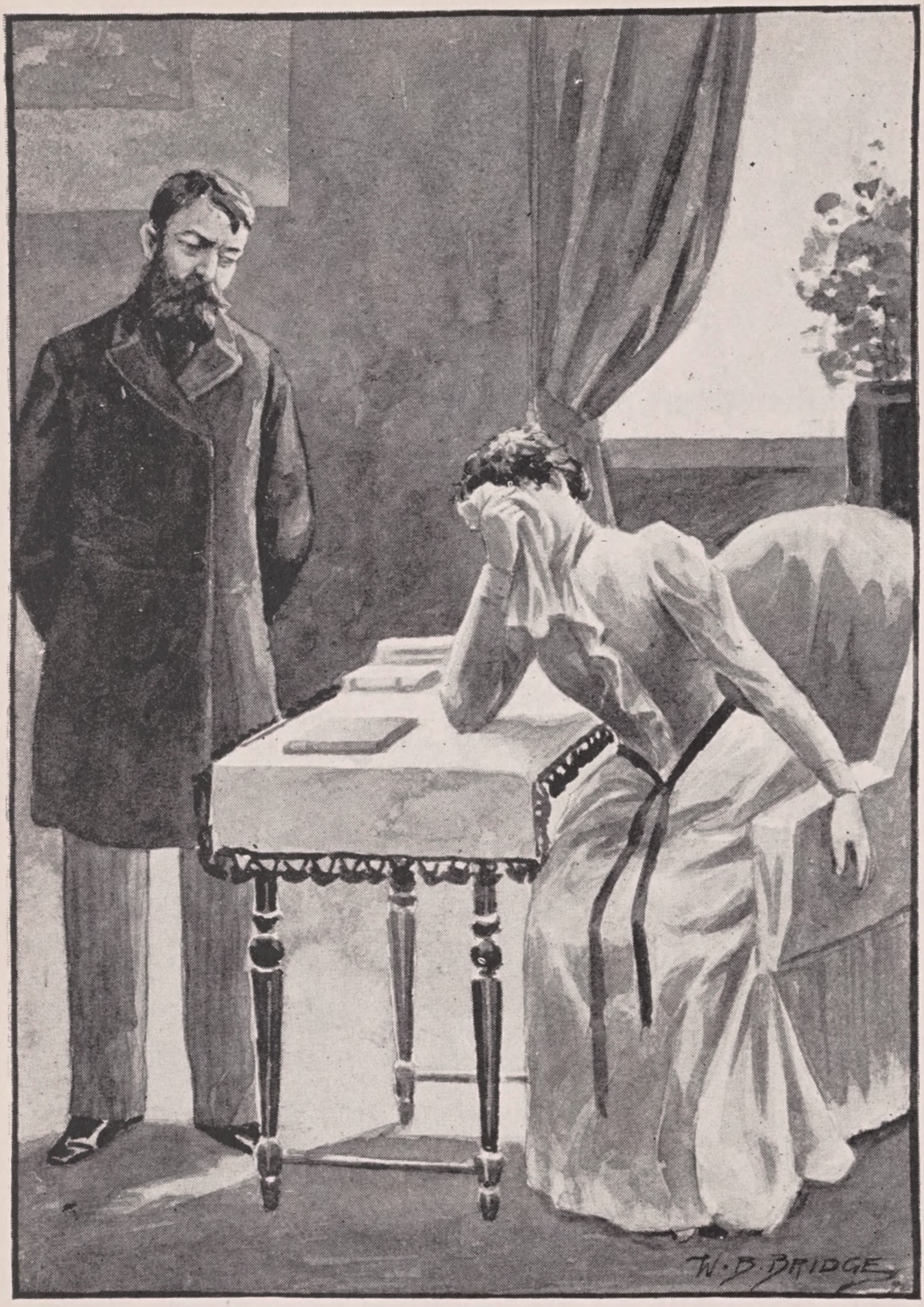
"My love turned at length to hatred, and that alone sustained me. Then I met you—you became the prop upon which I hoped to lean. Only when near you did I feel safe from the demons within my breast. You offered me your hand; for a long time I hesitated, although from the first moment I was drawn toward you. I struggled with my memories until I submitted finally, and committed the wrong of giving myself to you."

"I believe you," said Steiner, in a milder, sorrowful tone, "still I regret your fate and mine. You yourself have called down upon us this sorrow, and you are nevertheless guilty."

"I know that I have sinned, but it was from love."

"Love can only thrive in the light of truth. But you have betrayed my confidence, have undermined my firm faith in you. You should have told me the entire truth when I offered you my unsullied name. Your weakness I can pardon, your error I can overlook, but the lie I can never forgive."

"Yet I was silent simply because I feared to lose




"Out of respect for ourselves we must part, but not in anger, rather in sadness." p. 209.

you, because you seemed to me as a savior. Will you be harsher with me than was He who raised the repentant woman from the ground and said to her: 'All your sins are forgiven?'"

"She was guilty, but she did not deceive the Son of God. Truth saved her, as falsehood now destroys you and me. Truth alone could have saved and freed you; instead of that you involved yourself more deeply in the net-work of falsehood, from which no escape is now possible. Between us is the bloody shadow of that unfortunate man which separates us forever."

"And you can, you will repulse me, leave me to my fate? Pity and spare me," besought Livia.

"Oh! I pity you more than words can express. Could you see into my heart, you would find it torn by grief and pain. I suffer, probably, more than you do, for with my own hand I must destroy my happiness, my greatest bliss."

"You are too hard with me. What will become of me if you leave me?"

"Though separated from you, my love will follow you. It will be to you and me a comfort, a support, a light in time of trial. He who once has loved, does not cease. But truth demands the sacrifice, for neither you nor I can live long with the lie which disturbs our peace, poisons our hearts and minds. Out of respect for ourselves we must part, but not in anger, rather in sadness."

## VII

### A TRUE FRIEND

The sacrifice was made and Steiner remained alone with his sorrow. For not alone had he domestic troubles, the political situation had become very perplexing.

About that time a powerfully-built man passed through the gate of the town, with apparent carelessness, by means of which he threw the military guard off the scent. The stranger wore blue spectacles which entirely hid his bright eyes, and made his youthful face appear much older than it was in reality. Chin and cheeks were covered with a full, dark beard, which, upon close examination, would have proved to have been false; his hat was pressed down over his brow, and prevented all recognition.

"The Nurnbergers do not hang those whom they have not caught," he muttered gayly to himself.

Carefully he avoided the most frequented streets, and made his way to the door of Steiner's apartments, where he knocked lightly. A voice within cried "Come in," and the stranger entered the room.

"Hellwig!" cried Steiner, surprised at that unexpected visit.

It was the young student, whom he had reckoned among his most intimate friends since the odd meeting, at the restaurant, of the so-called "Clique," and who, since his marriage with Livia, had been a daily visitor at his house; though, since Bergemann's instal-

lation in the family circle, he had absented himself without Steiner suspecting the cause.

"Where do you come from?" asked the latter. "And why this disguise—such care?"

"Direct from the gallows," replied the student with the humor of despair; "but, all joking aside, from the claws of the reaction, which, as the official expression runs, condemns the democratic prisoners to powder and shot."

"Did you take part in the unfortunate insurrection?"

"The struggle is ended," replied Hellwig seriously. "All is over—*finis Germaniæ!*"

"I have more faith in the fatherland. Germany is not yet lost like Poland."

"But she is at the point of death, bleeding from every wound. As soon as the first heat of battle was over, I thought it advisable to make my escape and seek you out."

"But what can I do for you? I fear you will be no safer here; still I am ready to help you as far as lies in my power."

"I do not want to be a burden to you; I have sufficient money to take a long journey upon which, I hope, you will accompany me."

"You are jesting."

"I am in no mood for jesting. Would I have risked danger and sought you out? We have both no time to lose, for I know, from a reliable source, that there is a warrant out for your arrest."

"They will not dare to lay hands upon me, a representative of the people. My right, acknowledged even by the government, protects me."

"You know that government no longer acknowledges parliament. The king is said to have sworn to spare

no member of it who falls into his hands. Will you needlessly sacrifice yourself and become a martyr to a lost cause?"

"Our cause," replied Steiner, "is not lost. They can kill the body, but not the soul. Our adversaries may persecute us, put us in chains, drag us even to the scaffold, but they cannot kill the truth with us."

"I share your hope for the future, but the present is without hope, and at this moment no alternative remains but to fly danger."

"No!" cried Steiner, resolutely. "No! Now we must show that we are men, ready to defend our convictions with our lives. He who wishes to free the people, must be ready to-day, as they were thousands of years ago, to bear the cross and to die upon it."

"Then we will await our fate together," said the student with enthusiasm, as he offered Steiner his hand. "I will not desert you in the hour of danger; I give you my word of honor."

"I cannot accept such a sacrifice. You are still young and are not alone as I am. You have a father, a mother, who love you dearly."

"And you have a wife," replied Hellwig hesitatingly.

At the mention of Livia, Steiner started, but did not reply; a sigh escaped him.

"Leave me," said he, softly, after a painful pause. "Return to your parents and hide yourself."

"And you, doctor?"

"I shall remain to suffer for freedom and to prove the truth to our enemies."

Filled with admiration of the hero, Hellwig departed, determined to watch over him.

With his admiration for his esteemed teacher and friend was mingled another, not less powerful, senti-

ment, which Hellwig scarcely dared confess to himself, the remembrance of Livia, whom he had met and learned to know through his intimate relations with Steiner. Only one man did he consider worthy to possess such an intellectual wife, and that man was Steiner. To sacrifice himself for him, to risk his life for Livia, was all that he desired.

## VIII

### BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL

The few hours still left to him Steiner spent in arranging his affairs, in placing his papers in safe hands, and in destroying all letters which might compromise his associates, for he expected his arrest.

Dawn still found him awake at his writing-table, lost in thought, his weary head resting upon his arm. Before him hovered once more all the memories and experiences of the past, all his broken hopes and illusions. His happiness was destroyed, his ideals shattered; friendship and love had deceived him; the people, for whom he had sacrificed so much, had disappointed him.

His best friends and associates were scattered; many of the noblest languished in prison or rested in their graves, while a similar fate threatened him.

But still more painful to him was the thought of the deserters who, like Bergemann, bought life with treason, and went over without shame to the victorious camp of the enemy.

Like an entrancing vision, like a sad, sweet dream, flitted before him the image of the unhappy woman whom he had loved so deeply, and whom, in spite of all her faults, he still loved. With a bleeding heart he had separated from her; sadly had he seen her depart, and yet he could not and dared not detain her. So he stood alone in the bitter hour of trial.

Approaching footsteps aroused him from his gloomy thoughts; he suspected that they were those of his persecutors. When he looked out of the window he saw that the house was surrounded by soldiers and policemen, so that flight was no longer to be thought of, even if he had cherished such a purpose.

Calmly and with composure he advanced to meet the officer who was commissioned with his arrest.

"Are you Dr. Steiner?" he asked.

"I am," he replied.

"You must follow me, for you are my prisoner. Moreover I am ordered to seize all of your papers."

"I yield to force," replied Steiner with dignity, "although I protest against my unjustifiable arrest."

After the officers had made the necessary arrangements, the prisoner was led to the carriage awaiting him. Here and there a curious person looked after him, a man murmured threats against the law-makers and secretly clinched his fist; but the majority remained unmoved at the fate of the representative once admired so proudly by them.

Only the trial of the accused re-awoke the interest of the people. On the day that the jury assembled in order to pronounce sentence on Steiner, the large hall and the tribunals were filled. Government had left no stone unturned to prove Steiner's guilt. With great care the evidence was collected and such men chosen as those upon whose conservative tendencies they could depend.

When Steiner appeared, many a pretty eye glanced at him sympathetically, many a soft heart beat louder at the thought of his impending fate. But, above all, one woman was more moved than the rest; she was accompanied by a young man; as she was heavily-

veiled, she could listen to the case unrecognized amidst the throng.

When the prisoner entered she could scarcely suppress her emotion, her eyes filled with tears, a slight cry, fortunately unheard, escaped her.

"Courage, composure!" whispered the friend, who watched her every movement.

"We will be worthy of Steiner," she replied as softly. "What a man!"

For the first time since their separation Livia saw the prisoner again, after having tried in vain to obtain admittance to his prison.

In her despair Steiner's young friend was a great support. He devoted himself entirely to her, asking no reward but to share her sorrow, her pain. Both had only one thought in common, to save the prisoner and to free him from his prison, although all steps toward that end had so far proven fruitless.

She now awaited anxiously the sentence which would decide as to his life or death.

In his summing up, the unscrupulous statesman, in the name of the law, of society, demanded the sentence of Steiner as one guilty of high treason, and the punishment accorded such a crime—death by the ax!

A shudder passed through the audience, and a murmur betrayed their horror.

The accused alone was unmoved. His blue eyes shone with a supernatural light, and his clear brow was surrounded by the invisible halo of a martyr. He defended himself with his wonderful eloquence, with a convincing power of truth, with the inspiration of freedom.

His defense was received with a storm of applause. The excitement reached its highest pitch when the president bade the jury retire.

The silence of death reigned when they returned to the court-room. The eyes of all hung upon the lips of the foreman.

"Guilty!" said he.

A loud cry rang through the room. Involuntarily the prisoner glanced up at the gallery, where he perceived Livia by the side of his young friend.

A slight tremor betrayed his grief, which was not caused by the expected loss of his life, but by his lost love.

# IX

## SENTENCED

Supported by Hellwig, Livia left the court-room.

"Sentenced!" she muttered. "Steiner sentenced to a shameful death, and we must suffer it."

"I cannot believe," comforted her friend against his convictions, "that the government will commit such an atrocious deed. The king will surely pardon him."

"No, no," cried she bitterly. "I hope for no mercy. He will be executed."

"The sentence must be confirmed, and that takes some time. We will try to bring about his release."

"I would give my entire fortune, my life, for such an end."

In despair, hopelessly, Livia constantly formed new plans for his escape. She would visit him in his cell, change clothes and places with him. But that plan failed her, for the prisoner would not hear of it.

In vain did she seek advice and aid from their former friends; only Hellwig remained true to her. The fanatic, Römisch, had been arrested when about to leave for America, and tried likewise, principally for his participation in the murder of the Prince von Schwarzfels.

The Duchess von Taland, who since her lover's death had lived in the strictest retirement, felt it her duty to prove to Römisch her gratitude for his attempts to save the life of the prince.

Through her influence Römisch's death sentence was revoked to several years' imprisonment.

That news filled Livia's heart with new hope, and she determined to seek out the duchess and to beg for her assistance with regard to Steiner, although such a step seemed humiliating to her.

Her pride revolted at the thought of begging a favor from her former rival; but the thought of Steiner, of his sad fate, made her oblivious of herself.

So the rivals met—united by the hand of fate and yet separated—the proud duchess and the wife of the representative of the people; the one mourning the loss of the prince, the other trembling for the life of her beloved husband; both deeply moved, possessed by different and yet closely-allied sensations and memories.

"Mme. Steiner," said the duchess, inviting Livia to be seated, "you wished to speak with me."

'My husband's fate," she replied, "led me hither, your highness, and will excuse me in your eyes."

"And what can I do for him?"

"I ask your highness for the same favor you obtained for Römisch. I ask it for my husband, whose innocent head is threatened with the executioner's ax."

"You overrate my influence," replied the duchess, evasively.

"I know that one word from your highess would suffice. Have pity upon me and do not deprive me of my last hope."

"Though my petition was listened to once, you will see that I cannot repeatedly ask favors of his majesty without compromising myself by wishing to stay the course of justice,"

"It is not justice, but hatred and passion which now demand my unfortunate husband's head. Your highness must listen to me. I have a personal claim upon you and am ready to sell the same at the highest price."

"You are mistaken, madam," replied the duchess. "I do not bargain for my favors, like certain ladies."

"And yet you will listen to me when you have read these letters, which I will give to you on that condition."

Livia handed the duchess a package which she hesitated to accept.

But one glance at the handwriting drew from her involuntarily an exclamation of surprise as she recognized the prince's characters.

"How did you obtain these letters?" asked the duchess, visibly agitated. "Did you know Prince von Schwarzfels?"

"Oh! that I had never seen him!"

"You were his—"

The duchess did not finish the insulting phrase which, accompanied by a scornful smile, trembled upon her lips.

"Before you judge me," said Livia with dignity, "I beg your highness to read these letters. Only the direst necessity could have induced me to confide in you the deception practiced upon me by the prince."

"Do you seek to insult me?"

"I only wish to justify myself and to spare your highness the shame to which you are exposed as long as these letters remain in my hands."

"I am indeed curious. But before I make any promises, I must read the letters."

Hastily the duchess opened the package and glanced

through the letters, which gave her the key to the prince's entire character.

Respect for herself, her shrewdness and her worldly experience, bade her suppress her rising indignation, and avoid a public scandal.

"Well," said she, when she had in some measure regained her composure, "I will listen to your proposal on one condition."

"Your highness will find me ready to agree to any condition consistent with my own and my husband's honor, if you can promise me to save him."

"In return for my services, I require from you beside the relinquishing of these letters to me, the strictest silence with regard to this compromising matter."

"Your highness may trust me. As soon as Steiner is out of danger, the letters will lose all interest for me."

"Depend upon it, I will save your husband."

Comforted, Livia left the duchess, who at once ordered that her chapel be closed and that the prince's picture be removed from its place therein.

## X

### IN PRISON

In the meantime, Steiner awaited his fate with manly resignation. He had finished with life and awaited death with courage and firmness.

His consolation was in the purity of his convictions, in his firm belief in the final victory of freedom and truth, for which he was to answer with his life

He needed not the religious consolation offered him by the priest, for Steiner had within himself sufficient strength and support. His faith was the faith of all enlightened minds, the religion of love, of humanity.

While Steiner prepared for death, the Duchess von Taland kept her promise, and through her influence brought about his pardon, without his suspecting it.

When one day the barred door of his prison opened and the judge entered with a solemn air, Steiner thought he had come to tell him of the confirmation of his sentence.

Calmly he rose to receive the news.

"I am commissioned," said the judge, after a few preliminary remarks, "to announce to you your pardon."

"My pardon!" cried Steiner in surprise.

"His majesty has deemed it best," continued the judge hesitatingly, as if ashamed of his errand, "to change your sentence of death to one of imprisonment for life."

When Steiner had recovered from his astonishment he uttered a cry of indignation.

"Such a pardon sounds like mockery. Rather a thousand times death than such disgrace."

"I hoped to find you grateful for such a mark of clemency."

"Grateful to be treated like a common thief, a murderer!"

The judge left the unfortunate man alone with his sorrow, his despair.

The next morning Steiner was conducted to his prison. A guard and two armed soldiers escorted him to the station. Upon the platform waited Livia with faithful Hellwig, in order to see Steiner for the last time.

She stood there disconsolately, and gazed at the adored man to whom, under all circumstances, she seemed to bring misfortune. She could not even bid him farewell.

"Forward!" commanded the guard, and the prisoner was forced to enter the coupe where he was fastened in, in company with criminals, robbers, thieves and murderers, while the two soldiers, with their rifles, planted themselves on each side of him.

"Come," said Livia's companion, "let us go."

But she heard him not—forcibly Hellwig led her away.

The refreshing air, the motion of the coach, lulled Steiner to sleep. In sleep at least he was free and happy. So much the more terrible was his awakening.

"March to the prison!" commanded the guard, when the prisoners alighted.

Steiner followed the escort, which turned toward a dark building surrounded by high walls.

There it stood in the twilight, like an accursed, enchanted castle, guarded by evil spirits and demons.

At a given sign an invisible hand opened the heavy door, which closed behind him.

He was in prison!

He was led to a certain cell, where he was ordered to undress. He was to undergo an examination. He could keep nothing of value, and even Livia's golden wedding-circlet was taken fom him.

"I should like to keep the ring," said Steiner in a beseeching tone.

"It cannot be; it is against orders."

"Then I should like my wife to have it."

"The superintendent alone can decide that."

This painful scene was followed by one not less painful. He was ordered to put on the coarse prison garb.

He had no longer a name, but was No. 289.

His trials were not, however, at an end.

He was led into the workshop where he saw many of his former party-associates. After remaining there for some time, he was conducted to the cell which was to be his future dwelling. With horror he glanced at the narrow walls, the flagged floor, the vaulted ceiling.

In one corner was a jug of water upon a shelf, and against the wall a miserable straw pallet. The whole was like a living tomb. From a corner of that cell the superintendent took an object which, in his confusion, the prisoner did not at once recognize. It was a spinning-wheel, which he placed before Steiner.

"The director sent you this," said he with a grimace, "that you may not be idle."

"But I cannot spin," moaned the unhappy man.

"You will learn here. You will be taught, and if you

"God save me from madness," murmured Steiner, sinking in despair upon the miserable

do not spin your portion daily, you will speedily make the acquaintance of the lash."

With those words the superintendent vanished and left the prisoner alone.

"God save me from madness!" murmured Steiner, sinking in despair upon the miserable pallet.

# BOOK V

# I

## AT COURT

The revolution had been forcibly suppressed. Again the search for pleasure began; the thoughtless multitude tried to forget the memories of the revolution with its bloody horrors. In the highest circles of society, especially, did they seem to seek diversion.

Grand-duchess Alexandrine's charming, but small Residence, was not behind the larger cities in this. The royal family had always been famous for encouraging science and art, poetry and music.

Among those assembled at that brilliant court was the celebrated Norin, who was engaged as musical director. He soon felt quite at his ease on that strange ground, for the grand-duchess and the youthful heir-apparent showed him the greatest favor.

Above all was Norin interested in the fate of his new opera, with which he hoped to found a new epoch in the music of the day.

He himself led the rehearsals, and returned home so weary that he had scarcely a glance or a faint smile for Ada.

At first he spent most of the day at the theater and behind the scenes, where he soon made the acquaintance of the singers, both male and female, upon whose talent and good-will the success of his work more or less depended. Involuntarily he, with time, yielded to

the demoniacal power which that gay world exercises over an artist.

Provided with the title of grand-ducal theatrical agent, Giuseppe was once more the virtuoso's indefatigable aid-de-camp.

With sorrow did Ada look back upon the blissful hours spent in her happy shelter; on the days of companionship with the beloved man whom now she scarcely dared to call her own. He was constantly excited and irritable.

The thought saddened her that her love was not sufficient to satisfy the talented man, that she shared his heart with a dangerous rival, with his art. Then too her domesticity was interrupted, for on account of his position she was forced to enter society.

A few days after her arrival, she was presented at court. With a heavy heart Ada entered the royal palace upon the artist's arm.

Old Court-marshal Baron von Lingen and Baroness von Frankenstein watched over the dignity of the court, and they shuddered to think that Countess Harrer should be received in the royal salon at the wish of the hereditary prince.

The rest of society, too, could scarcely conceal their virtuous indignation, although the majority of the ladies and gentlemen present could not have stood a very severe examination. But the guiltiest condemned the most severely, proving the old saying that one can see the mote very easily in another's eyes, but cannot see the beam in one's own. Baroness von Gallen, who was present, with glowing cheeks and evident excitement related to several aristocratic ladies the countess' adventure, adding many poetical exaggerations.

Under such circumstances it is not to be wondered

at that Ada's and the virtuoso's appearance caused an unusual sensation and laid them open to many insults.

Wherever they turned, they were met, especially Ada, with supercilious or hostile glances. The court-marshal forgot his usual scrupulous politeness and took scarcely any notice of their presence; the Baroness von Frankenstein turned her back upon them, while Baroness von Gallen stared at Ada through her gold lorgnette as if she had never seen her.

Nowhere did she find a sympathetic glance, a compassionate smile.

Norin's presence alone sustained Ada, for she was crushed by the burden of the insults offered her.

"Why did you force me to this?" she asked softly.

"You know the crown prince expressly desired your presence."

"To expose me to such insults? What have I done to these people? Is not every woman here at least as guilty if not guiltier than I?"

"Let them laugh and mock! The storm will soon pass over, if we defy it. Show them that you scorn public opinion and it will soon bow before and follow you. I wish you had the Duchess von Taland's strength of character."

"Shall the duchess serve as my example?" asked Ada angrily.

The painful conversation and still more painful situation was interrupted by the entrance of the regent and the prince, who greeted those present pleasantly and were introduced by the court-marshal to the strange guests.

When Ada's name was pronounced all eyes were turned upon her. They still hoped that the grand-duchess would show her disapproval of the prince's bold step.

Silence reigned in the large room as Ada approached the great lady. If the latter turned from her, if she uttered one of those finely-turned but expressive sentences, Ada was lost forever.

Pale and deeply moved Ada awaited her fate. She stood alone, feeling her loneliness, her helplessness, in the face of her enemies.

Was it her touching beauty, her attitude which seemed to beg for pity, or consideration for the celebrated artist, which inclined the grand-duchess' heart to gentleness and sympathy for the guilty woman, but she met her with truly princely grace.

"Countess Harrer," said she in a loud voice, "you are welcome to our court and I hope that you will like it here."

At the same time she extended her hand to Ada, which the latter pressed to her feverish lips gratefully.

"An interesting, charming woman," said the grand-duchess to the amazed Baroness von Frankenstein. "You must include her in our circle."

Like wild-fire the grand-duchess' words were circulated through the room and they produced a marvelous change in public opinion.

"Count Harrer," said a young diplomatist, the oracle of the court, "is known to be a terrible tyrant, a real Blue-beard, who tormented the poor woman to death with his jealousy and drove her to despair. And if her royal highness, the grand-duchess, gives Countess Harrer her hand, it is only a proof that the latter is less guilty than the world thinks."

During that discussion, the youthful prince turned to the artist. He was of an enthusiastic temperament, a lover of art, who, in his leisure hours, amused him-

self with musical compositions, if only in an amateurish way.

"Dear director," asked Prince Adalbert, "how are you progressing with your rehearsals? If possible, I should like to have the first representation of your master-piece on my mother's birthday; I know it would afford her the greatest pleasure."

"Your highness is too kind. I will do all that I can."

"Spare no expense; engage the best singers and have the finest scenery. I myself will be present at the dress-rehearsal, for I am very much interested in your success. For some time I have had a wish which I am going to venture to express."

"Your highness has only to command me."

"No, I dare not, it would be asking too great a sacrifice. You have too much to do as it is."

"Your highness can count upon me at any time. It would render me extremely happy could I serve you in any way."

"If that be so, I wish you would count me among your pupils."

"I shall be proud of such an honor," said the artist, with a low bow.

"You do not know how happy you have made me. In time I hope not only to call you my teacher, but my friend, my guide. I should like, as did my grandfather, to build a new temple in my residence, to art and the sciences; but above all to divine music, and to take up again the work of my great ancestors.

"In a few months I shall be of age and shall undertake the management of things. I propose celebrating the occasion by founding the academy of art so long dreamed of by my mother. I hope to receive

from you, my dear Norin, valuable advice and support."

"I feel greatly honored by your royal highness' confidence and will do my utmost to merit it."

The long, confidential conversation between the crown prince and the virtuoso did not, of course, pass unnoticed; but when the crown prince greeted Countess Harrer the first, too, of all the ladies present, and took his place by her side, even malicious tongues were silenced.

## II

### THE CROWN PRINCE

Almost immediately after his arrival at court, Norin opened his salon. It became the style to appear at his soirées and even the exclusive aristocracy pressed to his musical evenings.

On one of those evenings the artist proposed representing the finest scene from his master-piece, "Tristan and Isolde," where the lovers, after the enjoyment of the fatal love-potion, are for the first time seized with the irresistible power of their passion.

At Norin's express wish Ada was persuaded to undertake the part of Isolde, as the prima-donna was indisposed, or, in other words, capricious. In order not to destroy the illusion, Ada again donned the old German robe which lent her a peculiar charm.

Encouraged by the applause, and still more by Norin's delighted nods, for he accompanied her upon the piano, she that day developed a never before suspected artistic talent which carried her audience away.

Ada was not singing merely, she was living over again a portion of her own life, all the bliss and pain of her past.

Entirely lost in her own sensations, she forgot all else, she did not observe the impression she involuntarily made.

With a wave of his hand, the crown prince refused

the seat offered him, and remained near the door, listening with evident admiration to Ada's singing.

He awoke as if from a dream when Ada ceased.

"You have afforded me great pleasure," said he, as he kissed her white hand.

"Your royal highness flatters me," said she with modest confusion. "I am only an amateur."

"That is not possible. I confess to you frankly that you moved me to tears, in a manner which I did not deem possible."

"The praise is due to the composition alone," replied Ada.

From that evening the prince was one of Norin's stanchest adherents, filled likewise with the idea of the musical reform of the opera. By his intimacy with the future ruler, Norin gained daily a more important position, by which he hoped to profit for the development of his artistic thoughts and views.

In their many conversations on the projected reformation, the young prince coincided with all of Norin's plans, and on one occasion he said to him, offering him his hand:

"I will unite in striving with you for that high aim. First of all I must thank you for the pleasure your teachings afford me. The future will, I hope, prove to you that the pupil is worthy of his master."

## III

### A BETROTHAL

"Do you know the news?" one day asked Fraulein von Laufen of her old friend, Herr von Beileritz.

"What news? Has the marshal resigned or been sent off?"

"Selfish man! You think only of yourself and hope to replace the marshal."

"Has Baroness von Gallen married the ambassador?"

"That is not it either. You know the baron left a will by which his widow, in case of a second marriage, must give up two-thirds of her fortune. The ambassador is not wealthy and she therefore prefers to remain his friend. Moreover, they say she has a weakness for the musical director."

"Therefore her hatred of Countess Harrer. But I am still awaiting your interesting news."

"Indeed you will be surprised. His royal highness, the crown prince, is soon to be betrothed. Can you guess to whom?"

"Who is to be our future queen?"

"Princess Leontine, the Duchess von Taland's only daughter."

"Impossible! You are mistaken."

"No, I am not. The whole family is inclined to be peculiar. I believe the prince is going to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. Just think of his friendship

for the musical director. They talk, too, of the building of a new theater which is to cost several millions, and of other undertakings and plans for the future."

"I would not be surprise if some day Norin were to be appointed prime minister."

"And the countess lady-in-waiting. The prince now spends his evenings with her and recently presented her with his portrait."

"But we are wandering from our subject, from the betrothal of Princess von Taland."

"You may look upon the affair as settled. As I have heard, the duchess will take up her abode in our Residence at the old 'Lindenburg,' which is already being renovated for her. The betrothal is to be announced on the grand-duchess' birthday and to be celebrated with great pomp."

Soon the entire town knew of the affair, and the liberal paper announced it without contradiction on the part of the official evening bulletin, which fact proved the truth of the statement.

This much was surely known, the old Lindenburg was being renovated, or, rather, remodeled at the Duchess von Taland's expense.

Upon the stately building seemed to rest a curse; the people told the story of a crime which, in days long gone by, had been committed there—of the murder by one of the grand-ducal family of a more favored rival. According to tradition, the ghost of the murdered man still walked, and many a sentinel declared he had seen it.

The castle was surrounded by a very fine park. An allée of linden trees formed the chief beauty of the garden, and to them the old castle owed its name of "Lindenburg."

The interior of the castle was luxuriant and tasteful. From day to day the new tenants were expected, for the Duchess von Taland was determined to make her home in the grand-ducal residence, at the court of her royal friend.

Notwithstanding her painful experiences, the duchess plunged more deeply than ever into the social whirl, for she seemed to wish to forget the prince's death and his infidelity.

Princess Leontine herself was one of the most charming of personages; she was of almost ethereal beauty and grace. With her dainty form which seemed to float rather than walk, with her golden hair which encircled her pure brow like a halo, with her deep blue eyes which seemed to reflect the skies, she was the embodied image of innocence, purity and kindness of heart—a half-open, sweetly scented spring blossom.

On account of her gentle womanliness, at the first glance she impressed the noble grand-duchess, who was seeking a wife for her son, soon to come of age.

The prince did not hesitate to receive from his mother's hands the bride chosen for him, while Princess Leontine, in her innocence, considered herself fortunate to have formed such a tie.

Both were young, handsome, amiable, worthy of one another in every respect, so that all hoped the tenderest affection would not be lacking.

Although the entire affair was still treated as a secret, the court and the entire Residence knew of it. Ada, too, heard the news, and she considered it only right to offer her congratulations to the prince, for whom she felt a sisterly affection, when he visited her, according to his custom, while Norin was busy with the rehearsal of his new opera.

Gradually the prince had transferred his friendship for the artist to Countess Harrer, toward whom he felt attracted. With her he laid aside his usual shyness, his almost girlish embarrassment.

Soon Ada became his confidant, from whom he had no secret, with whom he talked without reserve of his future.

Notwithstanding the fact that they were almost of one age, Ada thought herself much older than the prince, for she had experienced and suffered more.

She, on that especial day, received the prince with her habitual cordiality, though somewhat more seriously than usual.

"I do not know," said she when the first greetings had been exchanged, "if I am committing an indiscretion in congratulating your royal highness on your engagement?"

"So you know it already?" he asked, half-surprised, half-abashed.

"If I have made a mistake, I beg your pardon."

"No, no! You heard aright! I only wished to have the pleasure myself of telling you the news, but I see that busy tongues have preceded me. You were to be the first to hear of it from my lips, for I know, countess, what an interest you take in my welfare."

"My congratulations are, however, none the less warm. How glad I am that you have found a heart which is worthy of yours."

"You know Princess Leontine?"

"I saw her as a child and thought her charming. Since then she has grown to be a woman, and is said, so I hear, to have by far exceeded all hopes and expectations."

"Oh! she is a very delightful person," replied the

prince absently. "My mother is carried away with her grace and beauty."

"And you love Princess Leontine and will be happy with her, as you deserve to be."

"I hope so, when we learn to know one another better. To you I may confess that I have only seen the princess a few times and have scarcely spoken to her. I like her better than Princess Clotilde, who, as you know, was formerly selected for me."

"My God!" exclaimed the countess involuntarily, but without completing her sentence.

"Why do you not say what you think?" asked the prince after a painful pause. "You are my only true friend, from whom I can expect to hear the whole truth."

"Your highness does not understand me. Far from disapproving of your choice, I think, from all that I have heard, that the princess is worthy of you. But I wish that you had questioned your heart to find out if you really loved Leontine."

"Can a prince," he replied bitterly, "listen to the voice of his heart? Must we not give up a right which the meanest of our subjects possesses? From youth up we are the slaves of prejudice, of etiquette. And now when I am approaching manhood, when I have reached the turning point in my life, I cannot choose according to the dictates of my heart. My wife must be my equal by birth. I cannot question my heart, love and mutual inclination cannot decide us; but instead, a worn-out book of ancestry, yellow parchment, documents, appanages, and so forth—oh, it is maddening!"

Impatiently the prince rose and paced the room, while Ada sought to calm him with gentle words.

"I am sorry," said she, "that I unconsciously wounded your royal highness, but you required the entire truth from me, and I could not withhold it. Pardon me, if I have unwittingly hurt you. Do not be vexed with me for speaking more plainly than was perhaps right."'

"*I* vexed with *you!*" cried the prince, his eyes suddenly glowing with suppressed tenderness.

In surprise Ada gazed at him as he took so hasty a leave of her that she really believed she had either wounded or insulted him.

## IV

### BEHIND THE SCENES

During that time Norin was so deeply interested in the approaching production of his work that he entirely neglected his other relations. The theater and all that was connected with it alone interested him.

His stay in Paris had taught him much. He appreciated the power of the press, the importance of public opinion, the influence of friends, the services of the *claquers*, and knew he must leave no stone unturned in that direction to insure his object.

In that opinion he was strengthened by the sly Giuseppe, who seemed indispensable.

"Now," said the energetic agent, "we must show what we can do, so they cannot say of us, the nest is ready, the bird is dead. I have done that which others cannot imitate so easily; but we are not through yet."

"You do not doubt the success of my opera?"

"God forbid! Your work is a master-piece; but I have seen even master-pieces fail through clumsiness and intrigues."

"What do you mean? I know something is on your mind. Have I not agreed to all your propositions? Have I not yet done enough?"

"In your position one can do enough but never too much. The two critics of the 'Gazette' are displeased with you because you did not invite them to your

soirées. You must make amends for that. The tongue has already caused much trouble, but the pen is still more dangerous."

"Good; I will invite them the next time. What else?"

"Signora Wilder-Romani complains that the countess has not returned her call."

"The claims of that prima-donna grow daily more irksome. I cannot force the countess to visit her."

"He who seeks gold must stoop and not fear the dirt. The lady is the favorite of the public, has a large dependence in the theater and the Residence, and can make great disturbances, if she likes; therefore we must regard her caprices. Nothing remains for the countess but to eat the sour apple."

"I will persuade her to go for my sake."

"Bravissimo! I like that. He who has understanding will not lack good fortune. I see that you learned something in Paris."

Norin hastened to carry out the crafty agent's orders, although he was often led to take many a step against his better nature. As a father watches, cares, trembles for his beloved child, so did he watch, care, tremble for the success of his work; he shunned no humiliation, no sacrifice, if by that means he could purchase success.

With all the persuasiveness in his power, he sought to induce Ada to visit the prima-donna.

"That woman," said she, "is very disagreeable to me. Her immeasurable vanity exceeds all bounds. Moreover, I wish to have as little as possible to do with the theater. For I have, alas, discovered that all illusions disappear when we gaze behind the scenes. The less we have to do with that world of sham and lies, the better for us both."

"I see," said Norin, as if he were wounded, "that you still harbor the old prejudices and scorn the actor on account of his position. You should try to conquer such prejudices, especially when such important matters are at stake. The poet and composer cannot do without the actor and singer, upon whom he is more or less dependent."

"Nevertheless it does not follow that we must associate with them. I do not prevent you from visiting Frau Wilmer-Romani, from admiring her performances, even from flattering her vanity, although it wounds me when you derogate from your dignity. Do not be vexed with me," said Ada gently, "but I cannot conceal the fact that of late when together I have made such discoveries as rendered me uneasy. I fear that you are not able to avoid the temptations which meet the artist on his way. It pains me to see you associate with people who are so far beneath you, with men and women who, according to my opinion, are not your equals, like that Giuseppe."

"You do not like him because you think that he urged me to leave our quiet retreat."

"Oh, that is not all. Whenever I see him near you he appears to me like an evil spirit."

"He is a tool without which I cannot do, and he attends to my business which I do not care to trouble with. You will do me a favor, if henceforth you treat him more pleasantly."

"I will try to obey your wish; but, on the other hand, I beseech you to excuse me from calling upon the prima-donna."

"If you love me, you will make that sacrifice for me."

"It is impossible."

"The Lady Countess," said he ironically, "will not

condescend to the artist even if the success of the opera depends upon it."

"You wound me," replied Ada, turning pale.

"Pardon my violence, but it is necessary for me to keep the singer good-natured, for she might ruin my opera."

"I will call upon her," replied she, "if you think it absolutely necessary."

With one of those rapid changes characteristic of the artist, Norin clasped Ada in his arms and thanked her warmly for her compliance, while she suppressed her tears with difficulty. Her love conquered her opposition so that on the same day she paid the hated visit to the prima-donna.

Frau Wilmer-Romani, the public's favorite, was a stately, imposing woman, who, especially in classical roles, such as Iphigenia and Olympia, was very successful. Gifted by nature with a fine voice and unusual talent, she possessed all the means of becoming an excellent artist. But lack of education and esthetic culture kept her from attaining that highest step.

Like a goddess in her temple, the prima-donna sat in her boudoir, where she received the visits of her admirers. Everywhere could be seen her portraits in various positions. Upon the tables and étagères stood vases containing enormous faded bouquets, lay in wild disorder scented billet-doux, soiled, torn sheets of music, and newspapers with the latest criticisms. The prima-donna herself reclined artistically upon a couch in the company of old artists and friends of art.

The conversation carried on before the entrance of the countess, dealt with the topics of the day, gossip, stage secrets.

The announcement of the countess' name put an

end to the conversation, and the gentlemen took their leave.

The prima-donna rose from her divan and received Ada with the air of a theatrical princess.

"I am sorry," said she, "that the countess did not hear our conversation. Every one is charmed with the new opera and predicts the greatest success."

"And you," said Ada, thinking of Norin, "will do all you can to assure it. You are pleased with your part?"

"Oh, it shall not fail through me. But I wish that in some points Herr Norin would consider the taste of the public a little more. The principal thing lies in the effect produced. Although the opera on the whole is beautiful, I miss that part in my role which would cause a furore. The tenor is better provided for than I am. As I hear, Herr Liebert claims the opposite. He is never satisfied. But before I forget it, madame can do me a great favor."

"With all my heart, if it lies in my power."

"Madame has, I hear, such a charming costume for the role of Isolde, blue with silver trimming, over which his royal highness, the prince, raves. Will you allow me to take the pattern?"

"If you wish it; but I do not think that the color or the cut will be becoming."

"What suits you, will suit me," replied the prima-donna almost irritably.

Then, somewhat mollified by the promise of the pattern, she proceeded to initiate Ada into the stage secrets.

In vain did Ada seek to escape those confidences and to change the subject. Frau Wilmer-Romani reveled in retailing the scandal which was not always

of the purest in tone, and the countess, in order to escape the (to her) disgusting recital, was forced, after a short visit, to take her leave.

All her illusions had vanished, the veil was torn from her eyes, she could clearly see matters as they were behind the scenes.

But what grieved her the most was the discovery that Norin could not avoid contact with such an atmosphere. Nothing pained her more deeply than his weaknesses—every humiliation, every step which lowered him from his height, and in her estimation.

Norin at first scoffed at her anxious fears which she did not conceal from him. But when she repeatedly reminded him of them, he repudiated the exaggerated anxiety for his honor, inwardly so much the more wounded, because it had touched the sensitive point in his character, and it is known that nothing wounds like the truth.

## V

### A FIRST REPRESENTATION

At length the so-anxiously awaited day arrived—and Norin's opera was to be given. For weeks in advance, tickets had been ordered, and the best seats reserved for the court and its guests.

Even the oldest theater-goers could not remember having seen a more select assemblage, so much excitement and expectation.

On this especial day there reigned over the place that solemn, almost religious spirit which once hovered over the classical stage of ancient Greece.

Many older inhabitants recalled the earlier days, when, under the prince's grandfather, the theater had been a veritable temple of art.

There, in the parquet, sat the members of that classical period, venerable men with gray hair and white, stiff cravats, with dignified carriage, the admirers of the past and scoffers at the present, the remains of that golden age whose reflection again seemed to hover over them.

"We have not met at the theater for a long time," said one to his neighbor.

"If I remember aright, not since the last representation of Tasso when the old intendant still lived."

"Those were fine times and I often think of them with sadness," said another.

"Things are to be different," said another. "The

prince is very enthusiastic over the classical drama."

The conversation was brought to an end by the entrance of the grand-duchess and the prince.

The attention of the public was principally directed toward the grand-ducal box, in which seated themselves the regent, the heir and their guests, in order to grace the production of the new opera with their presence. The most interest was, however, centered in the well-known Duchess von Taland and the prince's future bride, who was envied by all the ladies present and admired by the gentlemen.

Ada, who had of course been received at the Lindenburg, was that night too in attendance upon the duchess.

She was forced to listen to the silly chatter of the ladies and gentlemen in waiting, to feign the greatest indifference, while in secret she trembled for her beloved's success, and could scarcely look up.

The prince whispered several encouraging words to her as he passed.

"Courage, courage!" said he softly. "I was at the rehearsal, and can promise you the most brilliant success."

Before Ada could thank him, the signal was given for the representation to begin.

The first act was received coldly; critical voices were not lacking.

Princess Leonore, who sat near Ada, with her friend, the ambassador, made many slighting remarks which could not fail to reach her ear. In the eyes of all she thought she could read Norin's and her fate. Only with the greatest effort could she succeed in controlling herself.

But the second act raised her hopes and the third scored an unprecedented success.

Breathlessly the public listened to the singing of the tenor and Frau Wilmer-Romani. Never had they done better.

In the entire house reigned that stillness which is more expressive than the loudest applause. Then, after a pause, the delight burst forth.

As the opera proceeded the enthusiasm increased.

"The victory is ours," said Norin's friends proudly.

The wily Giuseppe slipped like an eel through the throng in the lobbies and fanned the fire of enthusiasm with his fabulous stories of the origin of the opera, and of the sale of the score.

In the meantime the grand duchess sent a chamberlain to invite the composer to her box, where the most gracious reception awaited him on the part of the grand-duchess.

Not less flattering, but more sincere was the prince's greeting to the artist, who, before the eyes of all, embraced him. The Duchess von Taland and her charming daughter, too, overwhelmed Norin with praise.

The praise of royalty gave the signal to the courtiers for their ovations. They crowded around him.

For the first time Ada felt a slight tinge of jealousy when she saw Norin surrounded by that swarm of admirers from whom he could only disengage himself with difficulty in order to hasten to her side. Before she could express her feelings to him, he had disappeared, for the bell had rung for the fourth act.

When the curtain fell, with one accord the audience arose from their seats, and from a thousand throats rang a unanimous "Hurrah, Norin!"

In front of the theater was a crowd through which the composer walked in triumph, while those present bowed their heads before him.

At his lodgings Ada received him, for she had hastened home before him, and fell upon his breast in speechless delight. But only for one short moment could they enjoy that pure happiness.

Nearer and nearer came men's voices, brighter and brighter grew the lights. It was a torch-light procession which Norin's pupils had brought him at Giuseppe's instigation.

The torch-bearers were accompanied by a vast throng which cried:

"Long live Norin! Long live art!" until the artist appeared at the window and uttered several words of thanks.

Ada's heart was filled with pride and bliss as all the torches were cast into a heap and united in forming one bright flame which illumined the artist's handsome face. Then her eyes involuntarily filled with tears which she tried to conceal.

"What ails you?" he asked in surprise. "Why are you weeping?"

"Ah," she replied, "how closely allied are the greatest pain and the greatest joy, which have no other means of expression than by tears. How soon does the fleeting glow disappear, like those torches, in the dark night. And what remains of it all?"

"Fame and immortality," replied he, with sparkling eyes.

"And to the woman her love," whispered Ada, pressing his hand.

## VI

### THE CULPRIT

While the fortunate artist was celebrating the greatest triumphs at the Residence and at court, a pallid man, with emaciated cheeks and sunken eyes, sat in his solitary cell and spun.

Once he was a famous scholar, a most prominent thinker, a favorite of the people, who greeted him as enthusiastically as they did the composer. Wherever he appeared he was feted and called the "new Lessing." Now he was convict No. 289, a criminal whose sentence of death had been revoked.

Without, spring came and went, the meadows and woods grew green, the birds twittered and sang; but the season made no impression upon him, no rose delighted him with its perfume, no nightingale with her warbling.

The narrow windows admitted scarcely a ray of light, and the air of freedom was denied him.

At times he felt as if all were a horrible dream, but the sight of his narrow cell, the clanging of the keys, the monotonous voices of the sentinels recalled him to stern reality.

His eyes fell upon his spinning-wheel which stood in the corner. With trembling hands he seized it in order to finish his daily task.

"Rather death!" he murmured gloomily.

He thought of his past, of the people, of the friends

who seemed to have forgotten him, of the only woman he had loved and who had so bitterly deceived him.

A tear rolled down his pallid cheeks, a deep sigh escaped his breast.

The thread upon the spindle snapped; he thrust the hated wheel aside and sprang up. His brow was flushed, his temples throbbed, and his blood coursed feverishly through his veins.

"It is too much!" cried he, wringing his hands.

He grew dizzy and he no longer knew what he did as he seized the bell rope, whereupon a guard entered.

"What do you want?" asked the latter harshly.

"I must speak to the superintendent."

"You know what punishment awaits you if you annoy him for nothing."

"I must risk it."

After a pause the superintendent appeared with his stern, official expression.

"You sent for me," said he. "If you have anything reasonable to say, I will listen to you."

"Pardon, doctor," replied the prisoner. "In the name of humanity I beg and implore you to give me employment suited to my ability. I feel that the spinning-wheel will drive me mad."

"You will get used to it," replied the superintendent. "I can make no exception, especially in favor of one guilty of high treason."

"Is there no hope, no chance for me?" moaned the unhappy man.

"I will in your name appeal to the ministry, but I tell you beforehand it will be of no avail. Yet you need not despair," he added more kindly, "you have it in your power to lighten your burden, if you only will."

What can—what shall I do?"

"You have only to confess your guilt, to humbly beg for grace and your prayers will be considered and in time you may perhaps be pardoned '

"Never!" cried Steiner. "Rather would I suffer thus than so deeply degrade myself."

"Then stick to your spinning," replied the superintendent mercilessly. "He who does not heed must feel."

The next morning Steiner had a high fever.

The doctor, a fair, young man, with a rosy, smiling face, prescribed for him.

"Take this medicine," said he kindly, "and try, above all, to calm your mind."

"Can you cure a sick soul, can you give me a potion which will produce oblivion?"

'That is not my province. For that we have the priest, whom I will send to you," replied the doctor without awaiting Steiner's reply.

His visit was followed by that of the priest, a tall, thin man with ascetic features. Under the mask of Christian humility and piety was concealed a burning ambition and spiritual pride, combined with impatience. He did not wish to let the chance escape him of converting such a celebrated opponent of theology, and he hoped to bring the conversion about more readily as he thought Steiner's mind would be more ready to receive his views, he having been weakened by his long imprisonment and present illness. "I heard," said he, with simulated kindness, "that you were ill and sorely in need of the comfort which faith in Christ can alone bestow. Think of the Savior's sufferings on the cross and you will bear your imposed burden lighter."

"I have thought of him and think of him every hour," replied Steiner. "He too was mocked at, scorned and crucified because he recognized and taught the truth."

"That is not the true spirit," replied the preacher, "in which you should think of the Savior, if he is to help you."

He then proceeded to lay out before Steiner his views, to which he hoped the latter would conform. Steiner, seeing that he wished to draw from him a confession of guilt, or a betrayal of the truth, replied to his words thus:

"I thank you for your good intentions, but you are laboring in vain, if you think to convert me."

"I do not, however, give up all hope," replied the pastor with affected gentleness, while, secretly filled with rage and disappointment, he meditated revenge.

## VII

### PRISON STUDIES

In the old summer-house in which Livia had once lived, sat the sad wife, thinking sorrowfully of the unhappy Steiner. All her efforts to lighten his fate had been in vain; her repeated requests to be allowed to visit him in prison were refused Dr. Eichler succeeded no better; for he had not forgotten his friend, and was, with his wife, Livia's only associate; for the once so faithful Hellwig seemed for some time to have deserted her.

"I cannot blame the man," said the doctor, "for going away, for his own safety was threatened. Followed by the police, he has probably gone to England or America."

"He too deserted me," said Livia sadly, "although he solemnly swore to risk his life to free Steiner. Is there no help for him?" cried she. "I cannot believe that such a man should end so pitifully."

A burst of tears eased her oppressed heart, while the doctor's wife tried to soothe the disconsolate woman's despair.

"Oh! let me weep!" said Livia excitedly. "A woman has only tears, powerless tears."

"You will make yourself ill," said the doctor's wife, "and do your husband no good."

"What is my life worth? I have but one aim—that is, to save him. For that price I would cheerfully give it

up. I only wish to see him once more to beg for forgiveness and to die at his feet! Yet I am not worthy of such happiness."

"Poor Livia! You have done heavy penance for your sin. I myself was inclined to condemn you until I heard the details of that unfortunate affair from you."

"And yet I am guilty," said she gloomily. "I, though deceived myself, deceived the noblest of men. He can no longer love me, because he cannot respect me. I saddened his unblemished life, poisoned and wounded his noble heart, overwhelmed him with shame and misfortune. The hope alone of making amends for my sin has kept me up; it disappeared with Hellwig, on whom I depended to dare all."

"I cannot yet believe that the brave young man has disappeared for good."

"You are right," said the fresh, strong voice of Hellwig, who had entered the room unobserved. "Yes, it is I," he added with a smile, as his astonished friends stared at him after he had laid aside his false beard and blue spectacles.

"Thank God!" cried Livia, "you are here again! We feared that the police had discovered you and that you were obliged to fly from them."

"Neither the one nor the other," said Hellwig, who seemed in high glee.

"Where have you come from?" asked the doctor's wife.

"You will scarcely believe it and yet it is true. I have come direct from the prison."

"From the prison!" exclaimed Livia, turning pale and covering her face with both hands.

"Pardon my thoughtlessness," said the young man. "I did not think of the painful recollections."

For heaven's sake!" interrupted Livia hastily, "speak, tell me, did you see Steiner? Do you bring us news of him?"

"Unfortunately," replied Hellwig hesitatingly, "it was impossible for me to see him, for he is watched very closely, and no one, as you know, can speak to him. But I succeeded in obtaining some information."

"What did you hear of him?"

"That he was ill a few days, but is now convalescing."

"Ill in prison," moaned Livia, "and I cannot be with him."

"Calm yourself! That illness was Steiner's good-fortune; it obtained for him some relaxation, the permission to spend several hours in the open air, and freedom from heavy work."

"How did you succeed in finding this out without exciting suspicion?" asked the doctor.

"Fate was favorable to me. As you know I have for some time thought of attempting to rescue our friend. So, above all things, it was requisite that I should be familiar with the locality and especially with the prison itself. The undertaking had its difficulties, for no stranger is admitted within the prison walls. Notwithstanding that, I was determined to make the venture and told you nothing of my proposed journey. I stopped with an innkeeper who is a countryman of mine, and in whom I could confide without danger. He sympathized warmly with my plans. He promised to help me and kept his word. As many of the prison employes, outside of their hours of duty, visit his tavern, he introduced me to them as an old friend, under an assumed name.

"In the course of conversation, after several glasses

of beer, for which of course I paid, I expressed a desire incidentally to see the interior of a prison. My new friends promised to gratify my desire, and themselves showed me through the entire building.

"As we went through, I said I should like to see the famous representative of the people; but my companion's genial face clouded over and he pleaded as his excuse that he would lose his office did he fulfill my wishes. But I obtained from him at least the number and location of his cell, which has two doors, one of wood and one of iron, each of which requires two keys."

"It is impossible to overcome those difficulties," sighed Livia. "Tyranny holds her booty fast. Only a miracle can release the poor creatures."

"I do not give up all hope," replied Hellwig, "although I do not underrate the difficulty. For the execution of my plan a large sum is necessary to meet the requisite preparations."

"My entire fortune," said Livia, "is at your command."

"And if that is not sufficient," said the doctor, "you can count upon me. But above all I must warn you to be prudent. I fear you might be easily betrayed."

"Make yourself easy. I know what is at stake and am not so reckless as you think."

"What shall you do next?"

"First of all, I succeeded in forming an important alliance with Steiner's guard, whom I likewise met at my compatriot's tavern. A bottle of wine rendered him loquacious and I found him disposed to further a correspondence with the prisoner, although he ran the risk of being dismissed if discovered. More, I could and would not ask the first time."

"At any rate, I owe you many thanks," said Livia, offering her hand to the faithful Hellwig.

"Thank me when I have freed Steiner. I do not doubt that I shall succeed if I obtain the wished-for support on all sides."

"You may reckon upon me," returned Livia. "No sacrifice will be too great for me in order to free the noble martyr from his bonds. But I tremble at the dangers you are undertaking for our sakes."

"Fear nothing. He who ventures wins, and heaven helps the courageous."

The doctor recommended prudence, and Livia besought him to think of himself. With happy confidence and the courage of youth, Hellwig silenced their anxieties, and encouraged their hopes, so that they left the management of affairs entirely to him.

"I shall free Steiner or share his fate," said the brave youth, extending his hands to his friends at parting.

## VIII

### UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS

Favored by fortune Hellwig had escaped recognition, had passed to and fro from the Residence to the fortress. Gradually he succeeded in gaining the entire confidence of Steiner's guard and in forming, with his aid, the necessary ties. A letter conveyed by him to Steiner, informed the latter of his friend's plans.

Like a message from heaven did that unexpected news reach him in the midst of his despondency.

The martyr's patience was exhausted, and although at first he had thought of flight as unworthy of him, he now considered himself thoroughly justified in taking advantage of every opportunity to escape the brutal treatment of his opponents. He could scarcely believe his ears when his usually so stern guard brought him a verbal message from Hellwig. At first he thought it merely a trap, and maintained his reserve. But soon he was convinced of the sincerity and sympathy of his guard, who, beneath his austere exterior, possessed a humane heart.

"Pardon me, dear Hollman!" said Steiner. "But you will find my mistrust only natural. How could I suspect that you meant well toward me?"

"I have given your friend my word, and what I once promise to do, I shall do, were it to cost me my service and my freedom. I can no longer see such a celebrated man as you are in prison. You only said what

others hide from fear. Since I have read your speeches, I know that you are innocent, that you meant well, and I scorn your oppressing enemies with my entire heart. Therefore I have decided to help you, even were I to lose my position."

"If I am not mistaken, you are the father of a family. You must not be made unhappy through me."

"I have a good wife and dear children, for whom I must care. Only for that reason I did accept the doctor's wife's offer, which she made to me through Herr Hellwig."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Steiner in surprise.

"Of your wife. She has promised in case I lose my position to pay me a yearly salary of three hundred dollars and to care for my family."

"Livia did that!" cried the prisoner with emotion.

"Had I not a wife and children," replied the guard, "I would not have accepted it, but that I owe to my family. You will therefore not think less of me than you did before."

"Certainly not. I know that you are an honorable man, that money does not dazzle you."

"I almost regret that I agreed to it, but you can surely appreciate my situation. This matter will not proceed without danger, that I need not assure you of."

"Therefore I must consider if I can accept such a sacrifice from you and my friends."

"You may be quite easy. The matter looks worse than it is. With your friends' aid, if you are only brave, we shall succeed. Shall I take a message to your wife?"

"Tell her—but no! with your assistance I shall soon see her and be able to thank her myself."

"As you wish; I only thought a word from you would please her."

"I will write to her," replied Steiner, evasively.

"That is right, and when the letter is finished give it to me; I will deliver it promptly."

When the guard had left him, Steiner thought of Livia. Touched by her generous self-sacrifice, by her fidelity, he hesitated as to accepting it. The wound was still too fresh for a reconciliation. He could not yet pardon her for not confessing the entire truth to him. Between him and her stood Prince von Schwarzfels' bloody shadow.

But involuntarily he felt compassionate toward the unhappy woman; he bemoaned her and his fate, which was so closely united and yet separated them.

In prison he had learned patience and forbearance, however. He now saw how nearly virtue bordered on vice.

The more he pondered over it, the more he excused Livia's conduct. Unconsciously arose within his breast the love, which under the guise of compassion, tempered his severity.

So his mind wavered between inclination and conviction, between condemnation and pardon, between gentleness and austerity, incessantly.

In the meantime, Hellwig, with the co-operation of Hollman, made the necessary preparations for his escape. According to Hellwig's plan, the guard was to gain possession of the keys to Steiner's cell. A second guard, who watched at night, was bribed so that no hindrance was to be feared from him.

At the appointed time, the doctor was to be in the vicinity of the prison with his carriage, while his servant was to be at the next station with fresh horses, and,

under the pretext of a pressing journey, relays were to be ordered from post to post.

All was arranged and Steiner warned to hold himself in readiness. With increasing impatience he awaited the longed-for moment which was to restore to him his freedom.

Nine o'clock on a dark December night was chosen for the accomplishment of the bold undertaking. On the stroke of seven the superintendent entered Steiner's cell to see that all was right and to take away the lamp. Scarcely had he disappeared than the prisoner rose from his pallet, and hastily dressed himself in the darkness.

From minute to minute Steiner awaited his rescuer's arrival. Nine o'clock had already struck and Hollman had not yet appeared.

He listened breathlessly for his footsteps. Now Steiner started up; he thought he heard approaching footsteps which sounded like celestial music in his ears. It was the patrol passing beneath his window to the fortress walls.

The clock struck ten and every stroke resounded in the prisoner's breast. Time flew by; a moment seemed to him an eternity. His hope fled, and he began to doubt the success of the enterprise.

He tried to account for the guard's absence.

"His courage probably failed him at the eleventh hour. I cannot blame him, for he has a family."

Eleven o'clock! Steiner shuddered. It could not be so late, he must have made a mistake.

Suddenly treason occurred to him. His mental strength was weakened, his physical powers exhausted, he sank upon the hard boards of his cell.

"Buried alive!" cried he repeatedly.

His consciousness left him and for a short period at least his terrible torture was ended.

At the usual time his guard entered. Steiner awoke from his feverish, horrible dream.

"You have deceived me," cried he, "you have made me more wretched than ever, for you have robbed me of faith in man."

"I am innocent," replied the guard. "An unlucky accident frustrated my plans. Listen to me and I will tell you what happened. You know that I was to obtain the keys, which are kept in a certain room. With the help of a skeleton key, which Herr Hellwig made from a wax impression, I succeeded in opening the door. I thought all was satisfactory, when, to my astonishment, I found that the keys to your cell were gone. I sought, alas, in vain; for the police inspector, as a special precaution, had taken them home with him."

"Why did you not inform me at once?" asked Steiner suspiciously.

"Because I feared to arouse suspicion by a visit to your cell. As you know, there is a system of espionage practiced here, which embraces not only the prisoners but the guards. Under those circumstances I had to be content with giving Herr Hellwig a sign through my colleague at the gate, and Herr Hellwig informed your friends. So, you see, I could not act otherwise."

"Can you pardon me for having doubted you for a moment?"

"My God, that is only natural. But you must not lose courage," comforted the guard. "Your friends and I have not given up our plans. Trust in us and in that Helper in time of need who deserts no brave man."

So the good man comforted the unfortunate one until he gathered new hope, although the day of his release was postponed indefinitely.

## IX

### FREE

After the first unsuccessful attempt, the plans of flight were changed and a postponement was necessary, for Hollman's colleague could no longer be depended upon. Hellwig urged speed for fear of treason, for the whole matter embraced too many confidants.

"We must not hesitate, for danger increases daily. I see no possibility," said the guard, "of freeing the prisoner by the means devised. No choice remains but to let the doctor out of the window with a rope, which certainly requires a great amount of courage."

"I do not think Steiner lacks courage."

"Then have the carriage ready the next few days."

"The sooner, the better. My heart tells me that this time we shall succeed."

"God grant it! The matter has its difficulties. First I must obtain the keys. I do not think the chief of the police will again take them home, for I hinted to him of the responsibility if a fire should break out."

"That was a lucky thought. The possession of the keys is a great deal, but not all."

"When I once have Steiner out of his cell, it will not be difficult."

"I will be on hand at the appointed time, and will give our friend the signal to have relays."'

"And I will speak with the doctor and prepare him."

Steiner shrank from no danger in order to free himself from the unworthy bonds of his prison.

"I am ready to risk all for freedom," said he.

Darkness enveloped the prison; only with the aid of a dark-lantern, which the guard carried, was it possible to find the way which led them through the workroom.

Hastily the fugitives passed on, through the open door, to the loft in which was kept the store of wool and flax.

Here they found no obstacle until they reached the hole in the roof where they came upon a locked wooden gate which separated the store-room from the other rooms. Hollman had not thought of it and uttered an oath.

"Perhaps the lock can be broken."

"I do not think so, but I will try."

The guard drew his sword, which he wore at his side, but the bolt would not stir an inch.

"Nothing remains," said Hollman in despair, "but to turn back. The next time we will look ahead better."

"No, no!" cried Steiner resolutely. "I will not turn back, I had rather die on the spot."

Like a madman he shook the gate. But in vain! It defied his rage and despair.

"Wait!" said the guard. "I think an ax must be on the floor. I will seek it and break in the wooden gate."

"But they will hear the noise."

"There is no other way left. I will look for the ax."

Hollman found it quicker than he thought he would. He struck blow after blow. Every stroke might have awakened the superintendent, but fortunately he slept the sleep of the just.

Bathed in perspiration, the two men reached the hole in the roof, to which Hollman fastened a rope. At the same time he lowered a stone on the end of a piece of twine to warn Hellwig who was waiting below. A strong tug at the rope informed the fugitive that he was at his post.

"Why do you still hesitate?" asked Steiner, as if intoxicated by the fresh air which streamed in through the open window.

"We must wait a moment until the watch has been changed. It will soon strike twelve."

In a few moments he added:

"All is over happily. They passed without noticing anything. Courage, doctor! I will hold the rope and will not let go until you are down."

"What will become of you when they discover my flight to-morrow?"

"It is too late to think of that now. Forward, in heaven's name, forward—"

"How can I reward you for such a sacrifice?"

"You will make me angry yet. Give me your hand and do not think of me further. Nothing much can happen to me; at the most, six months' imprisonment, and that I would gladly bear for you."

"My noble rescuer,. my friend," cried Steiner with emotion, shaking hands with Hollman. Then he swung himself through the roof and seized the rope feverishly.

The night was dark and favored his escape.

For one moment he thought of the danger to which he was exposed, and with both hands he clung to the slender rope.

Greater and greater grew the space which separated him from prison and brought him nearer freedom.

He continued on his way, though his brain occasionally whirled.

At his feet lay the houses of the town. He closed his eyes, his heart beat loudly in his breast. Already he thought he saw his friend's form, the outlines of the carriage awaiting him.

In his hands he already held the end of the rope.

He was only a short distance from terra firma. He had to leap it at the peril of his life.

Unharmed he fell into his faithful friend's open arms, and was pressed closely to his breast.

Only when seated in the carriage, did they find words in which to express their mutual delight.

"Whither shall you take me?" Steiner asked his young friend.

"Over the sea to England. I will accompany you."

"And our friends?"

"They are awaiting you at the nearest station."

Steiner felt as if he were dreaming; the entire world seemed as new to him as if he had never seen it before. With deep breaths he inhaled the invigorating air, which strengthened and animated him, for he had been deprived of it so long.

Involuntarily his tears flowed, he burst into an hysterical fit of sobbing, overcome by pain and pleasure, by old sorrows and new joys.

"Compose yourself," said his friend. "We shall soon reach the next station. You must control in order not to betray yourself. It will be necessary, too, for you to change your prison garb."

Hellwig had provided everything; in the carriage was a new suit of clothes and costly furs, the gift of a friend. In a trice Steiner had donned them.

"I have put on a new man," said he gayly. "But

before all I wish to know to whom I owe this elegant dress in which I seem to myself like a king."

"To whom but to your wife, who has provided the money for everything."

"Livia!" cried he in surprise, while a shadow clouded his brow.

It was the first time that he had mentioned her name upon the way. Evidently he was struggling with the old painful memories. A long pause ensued which neither dared to break.

In the fugitive's heart sunshine struggled with clouds.

Soon the ether grew brighter, the sorely tried man's breast lighter. The mist fell, the dark shadows disappeared and the sun shone forth.

"Day is breaking, a new dawn," said Steiner thoughtfully.

"The dawn of freedom," replied Hellwig, inspired.

"Of friendship, of love, which saved me," added the fugitive.

Again he sank into a deep reverie.

A few moments later the carriage stopped at the first station, where his friends awaited him.

Among them was a pale, handsome woman who held toward him tearfully her emaciated hand.

"Livia!"

Not another word was spoken—only her tearful eyes pleaded, only his glance told her that he pardoned. Could—dared he repulse her?

With a cry of joy she fell upon the breast of her adored husband, never to leave him again.

# BOOK VI

# I

## DISCORD

For several days the Residence had been very gay. The coming of age and assumption of power of the young prince had been celebrated by the court with fêtes, illuminations and fireworks. In addition, too, came the public betrothal of charming Princess Leontine, to completely inspire the loyal population.

After the celebration many honors were conferred. Among those favored was Norin, who received the title of baron.

The young grand-duke himself bestowed upon him that new proof of his favor in the most cordial manner, giving him at the same time his coat-of-arms, a lyre with a crown above it. Norin became the acknowledged favorite of the reigning duke, whose full confidence he seemed to enjoy.

The courtiers secretly believed that Norin would become minister before a year had passed, and that the Duchess von Taland in time hoped to gain the entire dominion, which she would share with Herr Norin.

Those reports reached Ada's ears, for there was no lack of busy tongues at the Residence ready to spread the piquant news. Among the busiest of the scandal-mongers was Baroness von Gallen.

Though Ada was not inclined to attach much importance to simple court gossip, she could not conceal from herself the fact that Norin was entirely changed.

With secret sadness she gradually became aware of his insatiable vanity, his irritability, and his unreliableness. Still she would not believe in his guilt, though she was in no way blind to his failings.

The duchess seemed to her like an evil fairy in an old story-book, like a Circe or an Armida in the enchanted "Lindenburg."

Ada was firmly resolved to withdraw Norin from the influence of the intriguing woman, to strive with the seductive siren for her beloved's heart, although she did not underrate the power of her adversary.

Filled with such thoughts, she, on this especial day, awaited Norin in her apartments where he usually took tea in her company.

"I must ask to be excused if I leave you somewhat early," said he upon entering.

"And I was so delighted with the prospect of my evening, because we are now so rarely alone."

"Unfortunately I have pledged my word."

"As far as I know the grand duchess' receptions are held only on Mondays and Thursdays. Is there to be a change to-day?"

"No, but the Duchess Von Taland, whom I accidentally met, gave me a personal invitation."

"And you accepted?"

"I am sorry to leave you alone, but it was impossible to refuse her."

"What if I insist upon your remaining here?"

"I rely upon your usual indulgence."

"This time you have miscalculated," replied Ada, with a forced smile. "My older claim supersedes hers. You must yield to fate and give me this evening."

"You must surely be jesting, for the duchess expects me. She will be vexed with me, and I certainly see

no reason why I should make an enemy of the influential woman to whom I owe so much. By remaining away I should insult her."

"You do not need her patronage, for your position is assured. An artist of your fame should try to maintain his independence. You know what I think on this point."

"If I were to listen to you," replied Norin, somewhat angrily, "I should withdraw entirely from the world and live with you upon a solitary island. That will do in novels, but life has other claims on us."

"And yet there was such a time. In solitude you created your magnificent work; while social life, as you yourself complain, prevents you from working."

"Nevertheless the artist requires diversion. The duchess is, you must acknowledge, not only one of the most charming, but one of the most powerful women I know. In her salon the finest tone reigns."

"If not the finest, at least the freest; therefore do the men feel more drawn thither than the women."

"You judge very severely."

"But not unjustly. I look upon her as a dangerous coquette; so much the more dangerous, the more intelligence she possesses."

"If anyone could hear you, they would think you were jealous. I should not have thought you capable of such nonsense."

"I am not jealous, but I am disgusted with her frivolity. A year has not gone by, and she has already forgotten the Prince von Schwarzfels, as if he had never existed."

"You know how he deceived her. Can anyone blame her for seeking diversion?"

"Any other woman in her position, after such an ex-

perience would have hesitated to love again; so much the more because she is a mother."

"Such a reproach cannot be made against the duchess, who loves her daughter devotedly, and who has made great sacrifices of her fortune and property for her."

"By means of which she hopes to gain influence as mother-in-law of the young duke. She already, in spirit, sees herself future regent of the land."

"So much the more reason have I to seek her friendship."

"In reality, to fly from her; for the schemer, I fear, is trying to envelop you in her diplomatic intrigues. I believe the court atmosphere has infected you and will destroy the artist within you."

"You may make yourself quite easy," replied Norin, smiling. "Goethe was minister at Weimar without ceasing to be a poet. If I understand you aright, you desire me to give up my present position, to sacrifice all my opinions, to leave the Residence, and to live with you in a hut," replied Norin mockingly.

"I only wish you to avoid the duchess' society and to remain with me this evening."

"Impossible. I have given my word," replied Norin, taking up his hat.

"You leave me when I ask you not to!" said Ada, with tears in her eyes.

"You cannot ask me to yield to your caprices. It may be better for us both if I go now. Until we meet again!"

Ada was too proud to restrain him.

No word, no sign betrayed her pain. Only after he had left her, did she allow her tears to flow freely.

## II

### AT THE LINDENBURG

Far in the distance could be seen the brightly lighted windows of the Lindenburg, toward which Norin bent his footsteps, drawn thither by the secret power which the Duchess von Taland exercised over him.

After having drained the cup of love, he tried to grasp the artist's laurel wreath. But no sooner did the quickly-won crown deck his brow than his ambition stretched forth its arm for the golden diadem of government. With each new success his desires increased.

In such a mood he met the Duchess von Taland, with whom he formed a connection.

With her shrewd powers of perception she at once acknowledged Norin's importance; he possessed the full confidence of the grand-duke, as well as the sympathies of the romantic king, and could serve her on both sides. At the same time the experienced woman thought him calculated to take the place of Prince von Schwarzfels, not only in politics, but in the field of love.

At the Lindenburg Norin found what he had hitherto missed in his surroundings—the greatest luxury, princely wealth, freedom of intercourse, the perfume of the aristocratic world, elegance and taste.

At the sight of those brilliant rooms the shadow upon his brow, caused by his conversation with Ada, disappeared.

The guests who were in the habit of assembling there formed the intellectual court of the duchess, who united within herself not only aristocracy of birth, but, above all, aristocracy of talent.

For everyone the great dame had a pleasant word, a charming smile, so that she delighted everyone. With her most fascinating manner she received Norin, while at the same time she chid him for his late arrival.

"As your punishment," said the duchess, "you shall take me to the table. The supper has been waiting, and had you come a moment later my cook would probably have committed suicide."

"You must pardon me, but it was impossible to come sooner. Ada has been ill for some time, and I must humor her condition."

"Poor woman! Or, rather, poor man!"

"You can jest about it!"

"If you wish I will pity you, but above all I should like to restore your lost gayety. Away with gloomy thoughts! I allow no clouded faces in my kingdom."

Indeed, the duchess, during supper, was very interesting, and it was no difficult matter for her to scatter the last traces of his melancholy. She now flattered his vanity, now aroused his ambition, by, with apparent carelessness, unfolding the most tempting plans for the future.

It did not require the wine to intoxicate him. His surroundings, the glitter and elegance, even the number of servants in their rich liveries, the feeling of luxury, helped to heighten Norin's mood, and to excite his fancy.

Through the open doors of the dining-room, he could look upon the adjoining garden with its white marble

statues and silver springs whose gentle murmur mingled with the conversation.

"It reminds me," said Norin, "of Cleopatra's feast when she received the unfortunate Anthony."

"What a strange idea!" replied the duchess. "A Cleopatra in our prosaic times is an impossibility."

"And yet I know a woman who can compete with the queen of Egypt."

"Be still! If anyone were to hear you they would take you for a flatterer and me for a simpleton. Gifted women are rarer than gifted men. Only a Cæsar finds a Cleopatra."

"Enviable Cæsar! He could offer his beloved a world!"

"And she could share her kingdom with him."

"How insignificant, on the other hand, are our relations."

"It is not the relations, but the people. I know very few who have the courage to be happy. We are very virtuous, but horribly tiresome."

"Very true!" replied Norin. "We are the slaves of our surroundings and drag about with us the chains of custom and of prejudice."

"Freedom alone makes life beautiful; freedom alone produces true love."

"Who is free upon this earth?" asked Norin.

"He is free who has the courage to be so and who scorns the world's opinion."

A peculiar smile about her lips, a sparkle in her bright eyes, betrayed to Norin the secret thoughts of the duchess, which found an echo in his mind.

As soon as supper was ended and they had risen from the board, the majority of the gentlemen took their leave, only a few intimate friends remaining.

Norin, too, wished to withdraw in order to return to Ada who, he knew, expected him.

"What, would you leave me so soon?" asked the duchess. "I think the custom abominable that everyone leaves directly after a meal instead of remaining, as if one's mouth were only for the purpose of eating, one's tongue for the purpose of tasting Lafitte or Chambertin, not for conversing."

"I agree with you. The custom is unpardonable, and is owing, I believe, principally to the cigar."

"The poor cigar," replied the duchess mockingly. "It is surely not fit for the salon; we will go into the garden if the gentlemen will follow me. Coffee can be served in the pavilion."

With those words the duchess took Norin's arm and he was forced to lead her into the garden. In the silent paths he walked beside her as if in a dream, fearing to betray his thoughts excited by wine and passion. The soft moonlight flooded her imposing form and lent her a poetical gleam, a secret charm. Now and then a ray of light fell upon the brilliants which scintillated upon her arms and throat, and yet her eyes seemed more bright than sparkling jewels.

They sought his yearningly; their hands involuntarily met, and her hair, loosened by the cool night breeze, touched his feverish cheeks. Purposely or accidentally both had hastened on, so that their companions were left far behind.

"What a glorious night!" said Norin, merely to break the dangerous silence.

"I love the night," replied the duchess, "and prefer a moonlight walk to any other pleasure. At night the flowers smell the sweetest, the stars shine, heart opens to heart. Day is the prose, night the poetry of

life, yet one must not *sleep* away the hours," she added with a mocking smile.

"I am not sleeping," cried he with increasing passion. "I am dreaming."

"Of what?" asked she coquettishly.

"Of endless bliss, of ineffable happiness," he replied, pressing her hand to his feverish lips.

He scarcely knew what he was saying; involuntarily his lips stammered treacherous words to which she listened with a seductive smile, without interrupting him.

## III

### A LADIES' BATTLE

Several days after that fatal evening Ada sat alone in her room. In her hands she held a letter which she had just received—the anonymous report of a guilty liaison between the duchess and the famous composer.

"What vile slander!" cried Ada indignantly. "If I could believe such a thing of the duchess, I could never believe Norin capable of such infidelity."

With a gesture of abhorrence she held the letter to the flame of the candle, so that it was speedily consumed and became merely a heap of ashes.

Notwithstanding her faith in her beloved the malicious lines, which seemed to come from someone only too well-posted, had greatly excited her. Involuntarily a deep sigh escaped her breast and she fell into a painful reverie.

"No no!" cried she, springing up. "It is not possible. In spite of all his weaknesses, Norin loves me. If he is vain and ambitious, he is too honorable to deceive me. He only seeks diversion at the Lindenburg, which he cannot find at home owing to my indisposition. I am unjust toward him; I am certainly unjust."

So Ada sought to deceive herself and to excuse her beloved. Then she determined to repair her errors, to conquer her dislike to the Duchess von Taland, and even to pay her rival the visit she had long owed.

That same day she advised Norin of her heroic determination, which surprised and pleased him very much, for he did not suspect in the least her secret reasons for doing so.

The duchess too was not less surprised when Ada appeared on his arm in her salon, but, quickly collecting herself, she greeted her unwelcome guest with her most pleasing manner and her most complaisant smile.

The two women stood face to face, apparently calm and composed, like combatants in the arena, measuring their strength, before they cross weapons.

In brilliant toilettes, with flowers in their hair, ornamented with diamonds and pearls, they were ready to give and receive the death-blow, while, beneath gay smiles, they tried to conceal their sadness.

Kindly the duchess inquired as to the health of her rival, and how warmly did the latter thank her enemy for her interest, although both surely did not think and feel as they seemed to.

"I should be angry with you, dearest cousin," said the duchess in her gentlest tones. "You have of late neglected me and avoided us all."

"My indisposition was the cause."

"You do indeed look pale and ill, but your pallor is very becoming and makes you more interesting."

"If you continue in that strain, you will make me blush. Your highness certainly possesses a knowledge of the secrets of the finest flattery."

A scarcely perceptible quiver betrayed that the duchess felt the shaft. But after a pause she continued, paying her back richly:

"Not I alone, but everyone missed you. His royal highness, the grand-duke, complained that no one sees you anywhere. He speaks of you with a wamrth which might render his bride jealous."

"You like to jest. The contrary would seem more probable."

"Oh!" replied the duchess ironically, "you are a dangerous woman. You proved that long since. She who could fascinate a lion like Norin, must indeed be irresistible."

In that manner, the two women, with apparently innocent words, hid beneath the flowers the dagger strokes, and the poisonous lash of mutual hatred and jealousy.

Fortunately for Ada, who did not possess the bravado of her opponent, the painful conversation was interrupted by the young grand-duke, who had arrived somewhat later, and who now requested Norin to favor them with one of his compositions.

"I regret," said he, before seating himself at the piano, "that I have no new work to give you, for of late I have not been inclined nor inspired to work."

"That makes no difference," replied the grand-duke; "whatever you offer will be welcome. Choose one of your earlier compositions."

"May-bells!" cried the duchess, with a mocking side-glance at Ada. "Countess Harrer no doubt remembers the sensation which that charming piece called forth on its first representation."

"Oh!" murmured Ada blushing. "I think that composition less qualified than any other."

"You do not, however, think that the 'May-bells' have withered, or that they have lost their perfume?" asked the duchess, with a malicious smile.

"I only feared that the salon was not fit ground for the simple flowers."

"Ah! you are jealous of your privilege because the May-bells are dedicated to you; you wish them for

yourself alone. But the artist and his work belong to the world and you must be contented to share with us."

Although the whole affair was clothed in the form of a jest, it was nevertheless of the greatest moment to those concerned. Both women seemed to wish to assert their power over Norin.

Ada cast an imploring glance at him, while the duchess, on the other hand, besieged him with her seductive smile, so that he was indeed embarrassed, for he wished neither to insult the one, nor to wound the other.

Deep silence reigned in the salon. Ada thought she had conquered, when the duchess, who was standing near the piano, apparently accidentally dropped her costly lace handkerchief, which Norin picked up and handed to her. As she thanked him, she whispered several words to him, and he re-seated himself at the piano. The next moment he played the familiar May-bells. Ada turned pale, while her rival could not conceal her triumph.

Only with difficulty could Ada control herself, for the duchess, she fancied, cast upon her a mocking, victorious glance which seemed to say: "Not for you, but for me, the May-bells ring to-day."

Gladly would Ada have left the salon, but she dared not for fear of attracting attention and completing her defeat. She was forced to drain the cup of sorrow to the dregs. She was alone, unnoticed. At that thought she could scarcely restrain her tears.

Only one friend remained to her, the young grand-duke, who left his bride, Princess Leontine, to greet Ada.

But that distinction was for the unhappy woman a

source of new care. His manner, his words, betrayed unconsciously a hidden passion which filled Ada with dread suspicions.

If she tried to ascribe his energy to his youth, his enthusiastic nature, she could not hide the fact that a certain danger, if not for her, at least for the grand-duke, lay in that intimate intercourse; therefore, as far as she could with respect to him, she avoided him.

On that especial evening his preference for her was very striking. It seemed as if he had instinctively guessed her secret sorrow and wished to make amends to her by redoubled attention.

As she could only avoid the impending catastrophe by leaving the room, she pleaded indisposition, and, accompanied by Norin, left the duchess' house. At first they walked side by side in silence. She was too proud to reproach him although she thought she had sufficient cause.

"Are you really ill?" at length asked Norin, breaking the burdensome silence, "or is it merely a caprice?"

"I am indeed ill," she replied sadly, "though less in body than in mind."

"And of course I am to blame," he replied bitterly.

"You accuse yourself, I do not."

"Always and forever the same reproaches, which grow daily more unbearable; once and for all I must tell you that you only annoy yourself and me by your caprices."

"I would they were only caprices. Unfortunately I am convinced that you no longer love me as you once did."

"How can I help your dreaming of a romantic love which is to be found nowhere upon earth? You must

see for yourself that a man has other duties than to languish at the feet of his beloved, or to spend his time with her in some secluded spot. We belong to the world in which we must live."

"But the world is not this Residence, this court, the society of the Duchess von Taland."

"What has the duchess to do with it?" asked he gloomily.

"More than you think; I detest that woman because, because—"

"Why do you not speak out? Because you are jealous; because you listen to the people's gossip."

"This evening has, alas, proved it to be true. The instincts of my heart have always warned me of that woman, and now I hate her, for I have seen through her. She is your and my evil genius. If you still love me, fly from that dangerous woman, who wishes to rob me of your affection, to ruin you."

"What exaggeration! I should make myself ridiculous were I to obey you."

"Call me weak; but I can no longer see you associate with her. You seem only to have glances and words for her. She rules you entirely and you neglect me in her presence. One single wish of hers is of more value to you than all my prayers and tears."

"Shall I repeat my reasons to you again, why I cannot, dare not break with the duchess? If I pay her any attention it is purely out of consideration for her rank, her position. The same motives guide me which guide you to suffer the grand-duke's attentions."

"Only to escape him did I leave the assembly. For some time I have wished to speak with you about the grand-duke's conduct. A certain reticence has until now prevented me."

"You take the matter far too seriously. The grand-duke is an enthusiast and if occasionally he strays, we must not be too particular. I am glad that he takes an interest in you, and am, as you see, certainly not jealous. We will both be careful to make as much use of our situations as possible, as our interests go hand-in-hand. If I am on good terms with the duchess, and you with the grand-duke, we can together rule the entire court."

'That can surely not be your opinion," cried Ada indignantly. "I at least shall never stoop to such degradation!"

"I see no degradation in it. What do I require of you? A little amiability toward a prince who has the power in his hands. There is a certain innocent coquetry which you, unfortunately, will not practice. You would gain, not lose by it."

"I should never have thought you capable of such coarseness."

"Be careful, madame!" cried Norin angrily.

"No, no! I cannot yet believe that you could seriously propose such a role to me. Your ambition is dazzling you. There is still time; you can still save yourself and me, if you have the courage to give up your plans. By all that is sacred to you I beseech you to leave this court. I feel the ground giving way beneath our feet. Wherever I look I see our common defeat. Not for my sake, but for your own, I implore you to abandon that dangerous path which leads to destruction. Think of your reputation, of the holy mission you have chosen, of your immortality, of our love. Can temporary dominion, outward glamour, compensate you for those? Do you not fear that, amid such surroundings, your genius will end in ignominy?"

For a moment Norin seemed to be impressed by the truth of her words, but he no longer possessed the strength of will to heed her advice, her warnings.

He felt that he was in the wrong, but that feeling increased his anger, his irritability, so that his replies to her accusations and reproaches sounded harder and more reckless.

With a cruelty foreign to him he recalled to her his conquests, his triumphs, recounted the pleasures of his past life which he had given up for her and regretted all the prospects he had cast aside for her sake.

Like a stream withheld with difficulty, when once the dam is broken, the flood of bitter, mutual reproaches was poured forth on both sides.

Only when Ada, almost in a swoon, sank upon the floor at the door of her room, did Norin feel remorse awakened in his breast. Passionately he kneeled beside her, covering her cold hands with his hot tears and kisses, until she again opened her tearful eyes.

"Pardon me!" he implored.

Ada stared at him with a vague smile which moved him more than the most violent reproaches could have done. He feared she had suddenly become insane, while she fancied she had been dreaming.

"It is I," cried he in despair. "Norin, who still loves you."

At those words she pasesd her white hand over her brow, as if to collect her thoughts.

"You will not leave me?" she asked. "It would be my death!"

"No, no! You shall not, you cannot die," cried Norin, pressing her wildly to his breast.

"And yet," she returned, suddenly regaining full

consciousness, "my death would perhaps be the best for us both. I feel that I am only a burden to you, that I hem you in on all sides. An artist requires freedom."

"But not at such a price. I could not bear the thought. You will live for me!"

"Can one live when the heart is dead, when love is buried?" asked Ada sorrowfully.

"But I love you still, as I have always loved you," cried Norin, deeply moved.

He really believed the truth of his statement. Never had she seemed more charming than at that moment. With a certain pleasure he kissed the tears from her pale cheeks, while his eyes hung upon her beauty.

Ada smiled amid her tears and believed her lover's vows of eternal love and fidelity.

## IV

### THREATENING SIGNS

While these storms disturbed Ada's peace of mind, a dark thunder-cloud was forming over Norin's head. His success had naturally made enemies and rivals for him, who only awaited the proper moment to overthrow him.

The opposition formed found a stanch supporter in the widowed grand-duchess, who gradually saw her influence over her son disappearing, and who feared to lose it altogether.

Baroness von Gallen, too, lent them her aid, for she still cherished her old dislike against Ada and Norin. That sufficed to drive the baroness into the enemies' camp, where she was received with open arms as a powerful associate.

From her principally emanated all the scandalous reports about the composer's relations toward the duchess. With that object she made use of handsome Henry, who, since the death of Prince von Schwarzfels, had entered the duchess' service, and who, for a bribe, would act as a spy.

At the Baroness von Gallen's instigation he was the one who had informed Ada of Norin's infidelity by means of an anonymous letter.

As usual, the grand-duke knew the least of those intrigues and secret dealings, although his person formed the center of the same. He himself had been

for several weeks in a peculiar mood, which occupied him so completely that he scarcely noticed the world about him.

The nearer the day of his marriage with Princess Leontine approached, the sadder did he grow, although the bride chosen for him was in no way disagreeable to him.

Both were probably too young to understand each other; too much alike in many things to attract one another.

On the other hand, Ada possessed all the qualities which the grand-duke missed in the princess—knowledge of the world, ripeness of judgment, combined with a gentleness and patience which only experience could bestow.

Gladly he listened to her advice and her opinions of persons and things, which were always unprejudiced.

Unknown to him, that friendly intercourse had become second nature to him. He was unconscious of the true state of his feelings and Ada recognized them when it was too late.

Already her name was coupled in court circles with that of the young duke.

Those reports were used by Norin's adversaries to influence public opinion, but above all to urge the grand-duchess to a decisive step. From time to time libellous articles appeared in the newspapers relative to the composer's domestic life.

Then, too, there was no lack of complaints at the large demands upon the royal treasury for the improvement of the Residence, for the support of the academy, for the building of the new temple of art. Whether justly or unjustly, the dispensation of those

enormous sums was laid to the account of the favorite, and cherished against him.

Emboldened by their successes, Norin's enemies resolved upon an open attack.

From all sides arose accusations and complaints against the favorite, in which Ada was not spared.

The one error in her life served to justify the coarsest calumnies, the most incredible changes.

Daily she was exposed to the bitterest insults, to the most wounding humiliations. She was avoided by society, fully isolated without knowing the cause of such a change.

But she was grieved the most at the striking conduct of the grand-duchess, who at first had met her so kindly. At one of the last assemblies to which Ada was invited, the lady had not addressed a single word to her, and when she accidentally found herself near her, she turned her back upon her.

That ungracious reception did not pass unnoticed and gave the signal for hostilities. Wheresoever she turned, she was avoided. And when she drew near a group the conversation suddenly ceased, leaving her in no doubt as to the subject of their conversation.

Although the duke, as on all other occasions, remained the same, the scandalous reports were confirmed so strongly that soon no one doubted Ada's guilt.

Such unmerited treatment increased her irritability; Norin, too, suffered by it. To a certain extent barred from society they suffered greatly.

Ada's silent sorrow, which she could not entirely conceal, drove Norin to despair.

When she sat beside him silent and dejected, he recalled the days of his good-fortune when the hand-

somest women fell at his feet. But above all he was grieved at the loss of his freedom, at the consciousness of his dependence.

More enticing than ever did the world seem to him, the world which he had renounced for her sake as he did not wish to desert her.

Another unexpected incident came in addition to completely discourage Norin. The sly Bertini, whom he confided in so entirely, one day disappeared.

With increasing uneasiness Bertini had noticed the feeling of enmity against Norin and his friends. All those signs prompted the sly fellow not to await the impending catastrophe, but to think in time of his own safety and to hasten his long-meditated flight.

Taking with him a large sum of the money entrusted to him for the purpose of advancing art as the royal agent, he left the Residence at night without considering it necessary to bid his patron farewell.

Naturally, the flight of his protege and the scandal attached to it, gave Norin's opponents the welcome opportunity for new attacks.

## V

### MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Over the Lindenburg, too, which once only breathed of pleasure and joy, for some time had laid a dark cloud. Princess Leontine was indisposed and the evening assemblies at the duchess' were postponed for the time being.

In that woman's heart there was at least one pure feeling—maternal love. It had not escaped her during the past few weeks that the princess' delicate health was threatened.

Sorrowfully she saw her daughter's weakness increase without suspecting the cause. The physician who was summoned, examined the invalid, while the duchess watched his face with the greatest anxiety.

"What do you think of the princess' condition?" she asked when alone with him. "You do not think it serious?"

"Not exactly," replied the doctor, "but we must exercise great care, for the princess' delicate constitution requires it."

"Do you think there is any organic trouble?"

"It is less organic than mental, if my eyes do not deceive me. It seems that there is something on her mind which is slowly undermining her health. Your highness must pardon me if I seem indiscreet, but where it is a matter of life or death, all other considerations must disappear. As her mother you will know

best what of late could have affected her in this way."

"As far as I can remember, I can find no especial reason for my daughter's illness. I almost believe you are mistaken, doctor."

"At any rate I should recommend your highness to watch her closely. With all respect to our patient, I do not think it unlikely that she is hiding some secret, either from shame or fear."

"Although I cannot share your opinion, I will at your wish, of course with all necessary foresight, try to examine the princess, and will tell you the result of my efforts."

When the physician had left her, the duchess softly entered the room of the princess, who seemed to be asleep in her chair.

The duchess glanced anxiously at her daughter, firmly resolved to learn the cause of her suffering. At her entrance the princess awoke from her doze, opened her hollow eyes and involuntarily sighed.

"How are you, dear child?" asked the anxious mother.

"I feel somewhat weary and ill," replied Leontine, extending her feverish hand.

You are ill, but your condition, fortunately, is not dangerous, the doctor assures me. Yes, he thinks your recovery depends entirely upon your own will."

"I do not understand," returned the princess innocently. "What can I do to make myself well?"

"Much, if not everything. According to the doctor's opinion, your illness is less physical than mental, the cure of which lies entirely in your power."

"If such were the case I should at once try to recover, for your sake, for I know my indisposition grieves you."

"It depends only upon understanding clearly your own condition, which has always its difficulties. We are as little able to see our own souls as we are to reproduce our own pictures. For that are required other eyes, a mirror in which we can gaze and which shows us the truth. Such a mirror is the mother's eye."

"And what does that mirror say?" asked the sick girl with a forced smile.

"That you have a secret sorrow which you are trying in vain to hide from me."

"No, no! You are mistaken, I have never had a secret from you."

"There are secrets of which we ourselves are not aware because they are in the depths of our souls. Your sudden blushes, your involuntary sighs, tell me that I have touched the sensitive spot which you, perhaps unconsciously, hide in your heart."

"I have nothing to hide from you," persisted the princess, while her face seemed to belie her words.

"Leontine!" besought the duchess with a warmth unusual to her. "Be frank with me! You know that you have no truer friend than your mother, that I am always ready to make the greatest sacrifices to render you happy. So much the more anxious does your present silence make me. I will not bring to bear upon you my maternal authority, but will simply remind you of my love, which I have proved to you so often. Let me ohly know the cause of your suffering that I may, if it be in my power, put an end to it. Perhaps your betrothed is to blame?"

"The grand-duke! How can you think so?" asked the princess without any embarrassment, while the duchess looked fixedly at her.

"It has escaped you as little as it has me, that he is very attentive to that Countess Harrer. Perhaps you are jealous?"

"Why should I be jealous? I know that my betrothed is too honorable to deceive me. That he admires the countess I find only natural, for she is an interesting and agreeable woman."

"Have I been mistaken?" murmured the duchess. Again she glanced sharply at the pretty, pale face of her daughter.

"And you," she asked after a pause, "do you love your betrothed?"

"Why should I not love Adalbert? He is always kind, always considerate to me, although at times I fancy that we do not understand each other as well as we shall later on."

"And you have no other grounds for complaint against your betrothed?"

"Not the slightest. Since my illness he has overwhelmed me with the most delicate attentions. He inquires daily for my health and sends me the prettiest flowers, accompanied by the most affectionate lines. I should do very wrong were I to doubt his love for a moment."

The entrance of the maid interrupted the conversation; she announced the arrival of the composer, whereupon she again disappeared.

"I must leave you now," said the duchess to her daughter, "for Herr Norin is awaiting me."

At the mention of that name the princess could not refrain from shuddering, which fact did not escape the duchess' sharp eye.

"What ails you?" asked the duchess suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," murmured the princess, turning aside her head.

"A few moments ago you were so gay and all at once you changed so entirely."

"It is probably weakness."

"No, no. You are trying to deceive me, Leontine. I pray, I beseech you, be frank with me. Your condition renders me very anxious."

"You forget that Herr Norin is awaiting you," returned the girl evasively. The tone in which she uttered those harmless words, sounded so strangely bitter that the duchess was involuntarily startled.

The terrible suspicion which the mother scarcely dared entertain, much less express, became almost certainty. She would not, she could not believe the worst.

"As it seems," said she, after a pause, "the visits of Herr Norin are not agreeable to you."

"He does not come to see me," said the princess with well-simulated composure, "but you."

"That sounds almost like a reproach!" replied the duchess, glancing searchingly at her daughter.

"I do not claim the right to dictate to you whom to receive."

"Perhaps you have a prejudice against the man about whom, as you probably know, various scandalous reports have been spread by his enemies."

"They do not concern me, but—"

"Why do you hesitate to express your opinion of him before me?"

"I fear I may wound you, for I know that you—"

She did not complete her sentence, for shame prevented her from uttering, in her mother's presence, the words which filled her with the bitterest sorrow, abhorrence and grief.

For several moments silence reigned.

The duchess collecting herself first, said:

"If I understand you aright, you do not approve of Norin as a friend of mine."

"I do not know myself," replied the princess, "but I cannot deny that an inexpressible feeling of fear possesses me whenever I see him near you."

"Poor child!" sighed the duchess involuntarily.

"Indeed I may seem childish to you, but I am afraid of that man, who seems to me like a fallen angel, a Lucifer, as seductive as the snake in Paradise, like a tempter whom one admires and loathes at the same time."

"Those are only fancies of your over-wrought imagination, the results of your delicate condition," soothed the duchess.

"You may be right, yet I cannot help it. Even in my dreams his image follows me and disturbs my repose. Sometimes I really believe he is a magician."

"What nonsense! I thought you more sensible."

"Such sentiments arise against my will whenever I hear his name. I cannot help thinking that he will bring misfortune upon us all. When he touches your hand, talks to you and looks at you, he reminds me of an evil spirit which seeks your ruin."

"You do Norin an injustice, for I have more than one proof of his friendship."

"And yet I beseech you to avoid him. If you love me, fly from that man."

"I almost fear you are jealous of my friendship for him," replied the duchess.

"Call it what you will, I only know that it makes me very miserable and unhappy."

"Leontine! You do not know how your words wound me. Nevertheless I am ready to make the

greatest sacrifices for you, if by that means I can purchase your happiness, your peace. Still, you can see that I cannot break with Norin entirely without insulting him deeply. But I will as far as possible regard your prejudices."

With that assurance the duchess left her daughter, who gratefully pressed her mother's hand to her feverish lips.

The duchess could not, however, allay her original suspicions.

She said to herself: "No, no, it cannot be. I have been deceived. Leontine does not love Norin, she hates him. It would be terrible were she to love him. I shudder at the thought. At any rate the greatest prudence is necessary. I will only see him rarely and then in secret. But above all, Leontine's marriage with the grand duke must take place as soon as possible. Danger hangs over them both, and can only be overcome by rapid treatment."

## VI

### BETRAYED LOVE

Through the dark walks of the park wandered a poor, unhappy, heart-broken woman. In her anguish she heeded not the lateness of the hour nor the coming storm.

From time to time she paused to get her breath, when her throbbing heart threatened to spring from her weak bosom.

She had reached the vicinity of the Lindenburg, at which she gazed. All was enshrouded in darkness, only in the sick princess' chamber a light burned. For weeks no assemblies had been held in the brilliant salons, for the duchess, out of regard for her daughter's health, had retired from the world.

Norin, for the same reason, was not received by her. Already Ada thought he had broken with the dangerous woman forever, and the entire Residence shared her opinion. New hope animated her breast, when gradually the scandalous reports subsided. Never had Norin been more loving, more kind to her.

He spent most of his evenings by her side, or else he worked upon his new opera which, as he said, he hoped to complete in a few weeks. If at times in her presence he was absent-minded, she ascribed it to his great work. With the credulity of a loving woman, Ada dreamed of the return of those happy days she had once spent with him.

She had reached the vicinity of the Lindenburg, at which she gazed. p. 304.

By that anonymous writer who had not written to her for some time, she was again aroused from her scarcely won composure.

He not only repeated his former insinuations, but strengthened them by undeniable proofs which no longer permitted her to doubt Norin's infidelity.

As formerly, he was still meeting the hated duchess, but not openly; in secret, in order to avoid all suspicion. The secluded pavilion in the park of the Lindenburg was the spot in which the guilty pair met.

So said the writer, who bade Ada judge of the truth of his statements by witnessing their meetings with her own eyes. He named the place and hour of rendezvous and at the same time sent her the key to the secret gate by which the Lindenburg could be reached unnoticed.

"Deceived!" cried Ada, after reading the fatal letter. She left her dwelling mad with jealousy.

She scarcely knew what she was doing, whither she was going.

With the help of the key sent to her, she opened the small side gate, which led to the park. She now stood near the pavilion, hidden behind an enormous oak, awaiting with a beating heart the terrible moment which should decide her fate.

From a neighboring tower the bell chimed eleven, the hour set for Norin's rendezvous with the duchess. At the same time a bright light appeared in the pavilion. Behind the hangings Ada thought she could plainly distinguish the form of a woman.

It was her rival, her heart told her, like her awaiting the faithless man.

Ada listened anxiously.

Scarcely had the last strokes of the chimes died away, than her ear caught a slight sound.

The small gate opened. A dark form, enveloped in a long mantle, entered the park and approached the pavilion.

It was he!

Her anonymous informant had not deceived her.

At a sign from Norin the window of the pavilion opened, and instead of the maid whom he expected, the duchess herself appeared.

"Juliette?" he cried softly, deceived by the darkness.

"Juliette," whispered the duchess, "was taken suddenly ill, so I was obliged to receive you myself, for I did not wish to initiate any other servant into our secret."

"So much the better. Instead of the priestess, the goddess herself will open the sanctuary to me."

Ada uttered a cry of despair.

"Who is there?" asked he in surprise.

No reply; only a soft, sobbing sound could be heard.

Seized by a sudden suspicion, Norin involuntarily hesitated.

Notwithstanding the darkness he thought he saw a white shadow which appeared to him on the threshold of the pavilion like a ghost.

A bright flash of lightning lighted up a pale, silent woman who stared fixedly at him.

"Ada!" cried he with a shudder.

Overcome by grief, she sank at his feet.

He attempted to raise her in his arms, but she repulsed him with all her strength and fled before he could prevent her.

In vain did the duchess await Norin; he followed the unhappy woman who sped on before him like a withered leaf borne by the breeze. Fear, compassion and remorse urged him to do so.

He thought he had reached her, when she suddenly disappeared under the shadow of the trees. Still he did not give up the hope of finding her again.

Breathlessly Ada hastened through the gate into the open space, not knowing whither she was flying, farther, still farther, without pausing, as if she were trying to reach the end of the earth. Her loosened hair floated in the air, her shawl had fallen from her shoulders and the streaming rain beat unheeded upon her neck and face.

The delicate woman seemed oblivious of the disturbance of the elements, she was blind to everything but her grief.

One despairing thought alone drove her onward until she reached the flowing river. She leaned over the bridge and gazed into the enticing depths which seemed to beckon to her.

In the meantime Norin had instinctively followed her, rushing like a madman after the shadow before him, trying to keep in her tracks, lest she might lose her way and, in the darkness, plunge into the river.

At length he saw her leaning over the bridge, staring at the abyss at her feet. Only a step separated her from a watery grave.

They were alone, no witnesses were near.

Norin was startled by his own thoughts.

The next moment he rushed toward Ada, seized her as does a wild beast his prey, in order to draw her away from the dangerous abyss, as if he wished to protect her and himself from the terrible temptation.

Unresistingly she followed him; exhausted by the inward strife she suffered herself to be led to her apartments where she fainted.

When she at length opened her eyes, she saw Norin

kneeling at her bed-side, covering her hands with remorseful tears. Consciousness returned gradually and she turned her head away as if she could not bear his presence.

"Ada!" cried he, conscience-stricken. "Can you forgive me?"

"Oh!" she murmured. "I have only one wish, to die in peace."

"What a dreadful wish," he exclaimed, deeply moved. "Can you not be reconciled by the sight of my remorse, my deep sense of guilt—"

"Leave me!" she besought, her face turned away. "I only know that I cannot, do not wish to survive this blow."

"I shall not stir from your side until you have pardoned me. Only trust once more in my love. From now on I will do all in my power to make you forget your suffering, to heal the wounds I have inflicted."

"It will be in vain! From this last wound my heart cannot recover. I feel that it is mortal."

"I confess my guilt; but I swear to you that from to-day I will belong to you alone, that I will never see the duchess again. I will, if you like, leave the court forever. To-morrow we will go to Switzerland, to Lake Geneva, back to our old refuge."

"Too late!" moaned the miserable woman. "We must separate forever!"

"Do not utter the horrible word! We will now begin a new life after having sinned heavily and suffered still more heavily. Perhaps we shall succeed in forgetting the past so that it will only seem to us like an unpleasant dream."

"It is impossible. I can never forget this night. The thought that you wished for my death would never leave me."

"What a horrible accusation! It borders on madness!" cried he, turning pale.

"Oh, I read your mind as I stood on the bridge and looked into the stream. I saw you stretch out your arm to—"

"Silence, unhappy woman!" cried Norin, covering his face with his hands.

"You were too cowardly," she continued, "to commit a crime; too weak to allow me to do so. You desired my death, but you lacked the courage to murder me. You thought of the world, therefore you saved me; not out of love for me, but out of fear of the punishment, of the reproaches of your own conscience. At length I have found you out, and I know now, for the first time, that you never loved me."

"Mercy!" cried Norin, aware of his secret guilt. "I am neither so cowardly nor so wicked as you think me. I did not rescue you from fear, but from love, from love alone, if I did seem to yield for a moment to temptation."

"It would have been wiser had you allowed me to drown myself. This love is the curse of my life. We are now both bearing the results of our guilt. Nemesis has followed us; the revenge of the injured husband has met us only too severely. He knew what he was doing; he may be contented with his work. He has condemned us to unbearable punishment. We cannot look in one another's eyes without blushing. Like galley-slaves, we bear the brand of our disgrace upon our brows. True love requires freedom. I give you yours back, after discovering our mutual errors. We can, we dare no longer deceive ourselves, if we wish to preserve our self-respect."

Again Norin combated her determination with

tender words, with promises and assurances to which she made no reply. When he took her hand to press it to his lips, he found it cold and inert.

She shuddered and murmured several unintelligible words, as if in delirium.

"Ada!" cried he in terror. "What ails you?"

"I shall not have much longer to suffer," she replied, clutching at her heart convulsively. "I feel that I cannot outlive this blow."

"And I am her murderer!" cried Norin, sinking at her feet in despair.

## VII

### NEMESIS

An almost incredible piece of news ran through the Residence; the young grand-duke had at length yielded to the importunities of his ministers, to the intrigues of the court, to public opinion, which found expression through the mouth of the court preacher, but above all to the representations of his mother.

A letter in his own handwriting informed Norin of his patron's decision. Although the words sounded kind, the unexpected blow wounded his pride deeply.

The punishment followed on the heels of the crime.

Wherever he turned, he saw misery, unhappiness, the results of his guilt, the poisonous fruits of the seed scattered by his own hand.

Ada's condition was, according to the doctor's opinion, hopeless. A slow fever was sapping her life. The entire day she lay in silence, her head upon her pillow, her hands crossed upon her breast, with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes, too weak even to complain.

The mere sight of her was a terrible reproach to him, and reminded him constantly of his secret guilt.

"If she dies, you have killed her," said a voice within him. "She is dying of the slow poison you have administered drop by drop. No poison is more deadly than that of betrayed love, of infidelity."

The nearer the moment approached when she was to leave him, the stronger awoke his love for her which

had never been dead, the more unbearable did her loss seem to him.

"Is there no remedy?" he asked the doctor. "No hope? My entire fortune shall be yours if you can do any good here."

"Science has its limits," replied the doctor, with a compassionate shrug of his shoulders. "Death cannot be averted. It would be wrong to give you ever so slight a hope."

In despair Norin returned to the invalid, who perceived his agitation.

"You have talked with the doctor," said she in a feeble voice. "I suspect what he told you. I do not count my life any longer by days, but by hours."

"No, no!" cried he, striving for composure. "Heaven will have mercy upon us."

"You would deceive me as to my condition, but I feel that I have only a few moments to live. I would use them in order to make my peace with God and the world. Will you fulfill a dying woman's last request?"

"I will do all," he replied, "that you ask of me. Demand my blood, my life; I would give it with pleasure."

"I thank you," said she, extending to him her emaciated hand, "that at least at this hour you will not desert me. Soon I shall appear before a higher tribunal. I hope for divine mercy, although I have sinned deeply. But before all I must fulfill with your aid one duty which weighs upon my mind."

"Speak—what shall, what can I do for you?"

"I have," replied Ada, "written a letter to Count Harrer, in which I beg for his forgiveness. I depend upon you, as soon as I have closed my eyes, to send it to the count."

"I will send it," replied Norin.

"It is in the secret drawer of my secretary, where you will find it. You may read it after my death, for I do not wish to hide my thoughts from you. Our sin must be repented of in common."

"Can you forgive me?"

"I forgive you as I hope to be forgiven. I die without anger or hatred, but, too, without love. We cannot belong to one another either in this world or the next."

"Ada!" cried Norin, sorrowfully.

She could not answer him; exhausted by the excitement, she fell back upon her pillow, leaving Norin a prey to the bitterest remorse.

The shadow of death already lay upon Ada's pale face.

From time to time she sighed. Anxiously Norin listened to her short, feeble breathing, which could scarcely be heard and which at times threatened to cease.

Seized with fear, he called her name. She gazed at, but did not seem to know him.

"It is I kneeling at your feet," cried he.

A vague smile hovered about her lips, while her hands plucked mechanically at the white bed-spread.

Sobbing he cast himself upon the bed, which he bedewed with his scalding tears. He had only the one wish—to die with her.

Shortly before the end her consciousness returned; once more she opened her eyes and fixed them upon him.

"The letter, do not forget the letter!" she murmured with her dying breath.

Her last thought was not for Norin, but for her wronged husband.

The setting sun illumined with its beams the rigid features of a corpse.

The next morning Norin rose in order to send Ada's letter to Count Harrer after he had read it, as she requested. The letter ran:

"I feel near my death and know that I have only a few days to live. I am dying, solitary, deserted, betrayed, but I do not complain, for I have deserved that fate. Just punishment has been meted out to me and to my seducer. Were I to describe to you what I have borne, how much I have suffered, you would pity me and weep involuntarily. I have drained the bitter chalice of humiliation, of disgrace and of shame to the dregs. Too late did I perceive my mistake; at the moment when my eyes were to close forever did I see the light of truth. With deep repentance an unhappy woman clings to your knees and begs forgiveness for her sin. I have sinned against the noblest man in the world, whose worth I only discovered when I had left him, when I was unworthy of him. But I did not atone less easily for my mistake. In making this confession I count upon your mercy, your forgiveness. That is the only, the last thought, of your dying ADA."

With his grief for her death was combined the weight of such an accusation which served to completely prostrate Norin. Like a condemned man he followed the coffin of the unhappy woman whose murderer he considered himself.

After the funeral he cast himself upon his bed where he sought in vain for rest. Before his eyes hovered the image of Ada. Finally he fell asleep, but his conscience troubled him even then. In his dreams he saw the black coffin in which reposed Ada's white

robed form. Slowly she rose and touched his face with her hand.

"Follow me!" whispered the pallid, bloodless lips. Forcibly she drew him into the open grave, which closed over them both, heavier and heavier, so that he almost suffocated.

In vain he struggled against the terrible load which oppressed his breast until he awoke, laboring under great excitement, and sprang up in affright.

The door of his bedroom opened softly and by the faint light of the lamp, which stood upon the table, he saw a dark form which stared specter-like at him.

Norin fancied he was still dreaming, he looked upon the apparition as an illusion of his excited fancy, although the features were only too familiar.

In order to convince himself, he advanced toward the strange form.

The latter too advanced a few steps nearer him. Involuntarily Norin shivered.

Both stared at one another with searching glances.

It was Count Harrer.

His bronzed face was changed, his hair was gray, his form bent, but in his eyes glowed a suppressed fire.

"As I see," said he in a hollow voice, "I have come too late. Ada no longer lives."

"She rests in peace," replied Norin, pale but composed.

"Then I have only one duty to perform—to avenge the dead, to punish her murderer!"

"Count! You have been sufficiently avenged."

"Sufficiently avenged!" cried he with flaming eyes. "Do you really believe that I shall be contented to have you suffer for the moment only? I know you

better—every impulse of your heart. You will soon forget the unhappy woman in the arms of some other faithless one, as you betrayed and neglected the living."

"Never! I swear to you!"

"Did you not swear the same when you robbed me of my happiness, my life, my greatest treasures? Do you consider me foolish enough to trust to your oaths, to your words? At that time consideration for her who is now no more restrained me, but to-day you shall not escape just punishment. You owe me reparation for all the misery, the sorrow, the disgrace you have heaped upon my head—for every tear, every complaint of that unfortunate woman."

"You alone have the right to insult me unpunished," said Norin.

"And yet words are inadequate to accuse you. You destroyed my peace, my happiness, broke my heart, poisoned my mind, stifled love and faith in my breast, awoke within me all the evil spirits, hatred and anger, mistrust and despair. Notwithstanding that, I restrained my revenge out of consideration for Ada, out of compassion for the woman whom, in spite of her guilt, I could not forget. Invisibly I followed you, watched your every step; for months, for years, at home, abroad, on the shores of Lake Geneva, at court and—in the Lindenburg pavilion."

"This is too much," cried Norin, coloring.

"Yes," returned the count calmly, "I degraded myself to spy upon you. Through you I was avenged upon Ada. The seducer became the executioner, and the hand of the beloved itself stretched the sacrifice upon the rack and completed the sentence of justice upon the erring woman."

'We both suffered deeply. It would have been better had you killed us at the moment when you were justified in doing so."

"God did not wish it; the just Judge at that time turned aside my weapon that it might find you later. There is a retribution which only spares the sinner to punish him the more severely."

"Ah, you speak the truth," moaned Norin, covering his face with both hands. "You can gloat over my misery to which even the tortures of hell are as naught. You would pity me could you see into my heart."

"Pity!" laughed the count bitterly. "Did you pity me when you robbed me of my life's happiness, of the love of an adored wife? And what did you do with the heart you tore from me? You tortured, betrayed, trampled it under foot, slowly tormented it to death and delighted in its agony."

"Cease, count!"

"The woman who trusted you, who gave up to you her honor, her reputation, her position, her entire happiness, you betrayed, deceived, sacrificed to a shameless rival. And you dare to ask for pity!"

"I ask no mercy from you," replied Norin with averted head. "You cannot judge me more severely than does my own conscience. The bitterest remorse gnaws at my heart and strikes more deeply into my soul than your curses which, in the consciousness of my guilt, I must bear."

"Can your remorse awake the dead, recall the murdered to life? Do you think you can move me, deceive me by your grief? You are too great an artist, too famous a genius, not to find comfort speedily. To-morrow you will celebrate a new triumph, deceive

another victim, curse another man as you did me, ruin and render wretched another home, if I do not prevent you."

"And what do you require of me?"

"Life for life, justice for the dead, punishment for the guilty."

"You challenge me—

"To a combat in which one of us must fall—to a duel for life or death."

"I am ready. As soon as I have arranged my affairs, I shall be at your service."

"In an hour I will send you my second, with whom you can fix the time and place."

The following day, Norin, accompanied by his second, arrived at the appointed spot, a forest in the neighborhood of the Residence, where Count Harrer was already awaiting him with his second.

The rising sun lighted with his golden rays the two men, standing opposite each other, one of whom was not to see the sunset.

Deep, solemn silence reigned, interrupted only by the twittering of the awakening birds amid the green foliage.

Softly the seconds whispered, while the doctor arranged his instruments and bandages.

Norin leaned against a tree and watched the loading of the pistols. From time to time he shivered, although he did not lack courage. He was thinking of Ada.

The final words were spoken.

Silently the opponents seized their weapons and took their places.

The seconds gave the signal and two shots were fired.

When the smoke had disappeared, Norin fell.

The second caught him in his arms.

The bullet had pierced his heart.

While the count with icy composure left the ground as if he had but fulfilled his duty, the doctor examined the injured man's wounds.

Once more the dying musician opened his eyes only to close them forever.

His companion returned to the Residence with the remains. In the vicinity of the Lindenburg he met an elegantly-appointed equipage in which sat the Duchess von Taland with her sick daughter, on her way to the south, where she hoped to find relief for the sufferer.

One glance told her all. Before she could call to the coachman, the princess had recognized the corpse. Turning pale, she sank into her disconsolate mother's arms.

"My child, my unhappy child!" cried the latter in despair.

Nemesis, too, had overtaken her.

THE END

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